

Cantos I & II

of

Don X Juan

BY GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Annotations by Peter Gallagher



Celebrating 200 years since the first publication
of Cantos I & II of *Don X Juan* in July, 1819.

For more information please visit

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V 1.0

The Contents



CANTO I Don Juan is born in Seville to the unwary, philandering, Don José and his ‘learnéd’ wife, Donna Inez. José dies when Juan is young leaving Inez to raise him according to strict principles that leave Juan with no knowledge of anything practical, much less biological. Donna Julia, 23 years old and married to the much older Don Alfonso (a former beau of Inez), falls for the handsome, 16-year old Juan. Although she resists the temptation at first, Julia seduces Juan. Don Alfonso, suspecting that his wife may be having an affair, bursts into their bedroom one night, followed by a lawyer and witnesses. Julia and her servant hide Juan under the covers of the bed just in time. Farcical scenes ensue. Finally, Juan is discovered. After a brief struggle with Alfonso, he easily prevails and flees into the night. To dampen scandal, Inez sends Juan off on a sea-voyage ‘to improve his morals’, while Julia withdraws to a nunnery.




CANTO II The ship on which Juan leaves Spain is wrecked by a storm in the Bay of Lion. The crew, Juan, and his entourage take to a boat. As hunger and thirst take their toll on the marooned sailors, they resolve to kill one of their number and eat him. The lot falls to Juan’s tutor. Only Juan refuses to join in the ghastly feast. Madness and despair grip the survivors. One by one, even in sight of land, they perish or drown. Juan, alone, manages to swim ashore on an Ionian island where he faints, exhausted on the beach. Haidée, the beautiful daughter of the pirate-slaver Lambro, master of the island, discovers Juan. She hides him in a cave and nurses him back to health, teaching him, meanwhile to speak Greek. One night, on the moonlit strand, they consummate their love.

Forword

ON 15 JULY, 1819, London publisher John Murray issued 1500 copies of Cantos I and II of Lord Byron's new poem *Don Juan* anonymously: he feared it might harm his Author's reputation and his own. *Don✕Juan* spurned the censorship and self-censorship of late Regency literature. Here was a major poet writing light-heartedly, with great energy and wit about "*what everyone knows*" of sex, fame, war, religion and liberty but few — no establishment figure, certainly, in 1819 — would discuss. Except Lord Byron.

Everyone knows these things still. The notes and illustrations in this edition are meant only to refresh the jokes, jibes and historical references of *Don✕Juan* for readers 200 years later. But notes can get in the way of a first-reading of the poetry. So I have also released into the public domain my **narration of the two cantos** in MP3 format — available for listening or downloading from [dropbox] — to help *potential* readers become acquainted with the poem.

Then, to help listeners find their place in the text and to help readers find their place in the audio file, this text contains time-markers —  o'oo" — keyed to the audio file every hundred-lines or so.

My text follows the edition of Steffan, Steffan & Pratt in the widely-available Penguin Classics edition. Sometimes, however, I use variant spellings, punctuation and even text suggested by Dr Peter Cochran's expertly annotated edition, based on his reading of the manuscripts.

I owe a great debt to Peter Cochran's extensive commentary (*PC* in the text); to the notes in the Steffan/Penguin edition, and; to the footnotes that Dr Isaac Asimov (*IA* in the text) provides in his beautiful edition of *Don✕Juan* illustrated by Milton Glaser (Doubleday, 1973).

This PDF edition of *Don✕Juan* has been prepared for reading on-screen using any of the popular & free PDF readers. The file will display on a phone screen, but it may be hard to read. You can listen to the audio files in any computer-audio player such as the free VLC and even in your web-browser.

The notes and the audio file accompanying this edition of Cantos I & II of *Don✕Juan* are covered by a Creative Commons "Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0)" license. So long as you give credit to Peter Gallagher at madbaddangerous.com, you may copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format. You may also adapt and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. To preserve these versions they have also been uploaded to archive.org

Canto I

*Difficile est proprie communia
dicere*

HORACE *Epistola ad Pisones*

I

I WANT A HERO: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan—
We all have seen him, in the pantomime,
Sent to the devil somewhat ere his time.

I WANT A HERO... ✎ Byron begins with an abrupt focus on his main subject: **himself** and his ironic disaffection. If he lacks or needs a hero — “want” has both senses — the fault lies with England and the Age. At the height of its post-Napoleonic ascendancy in Europe, the country has no heroes; only forgettable pretenders or ‘butchers’. He might as well borrow a hero, or villain, from the pantomime: a protagonist whose reputation as a high born rogue and seducer recalls his own, after he fled England in 1816.

Byron’s reputation was only (somewhat) unfair. Juan, however, is nothing like the roué of the Pantomime. Rather, he is modest, earnest, passive and unreflective. He’s a dashing lad, but a serial monogamist who has little to say, and when he offers an opinion, it is conventional. *Machismo minus*.

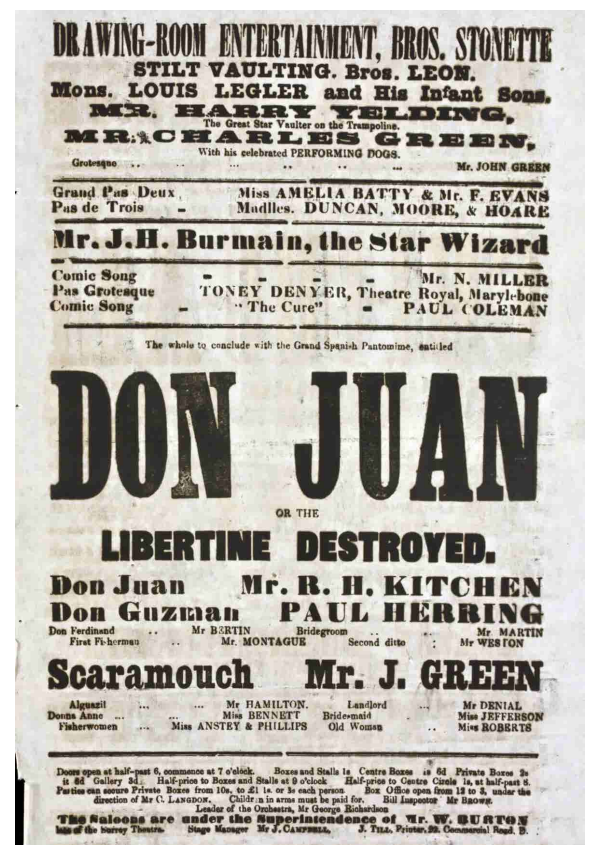
Of course, epic poems never start in the first person or without a well-known hero. Byron wants to advertise his readiness to flaunt the rules. He’s even more explicit about this in Stanza VI — which was the second stanza in an early draft. But there’s another irony in this first phrase, too, that B. may or may not have recognised. He never finds a hero for his poem: only **Heroines**. And several of those.

II

Vernon, the butcher Cumberland, Wolfe, Hawke,
Prince Ferdinand, Granby, Burgoyne, Keppel, Howe,
Evil and good, have had their tithe of talk,
And fill’d their sign posts then, like Wellesley now;
Each in their turn like Banquo’s monarchs stalk,
Followers of fame, “nine farrow” of that sow:
France, too, had Buonaparté and Dumourier
Recorded in the Moniteur and Courier.

“DIFFICILE EST...” ✧ “It’s hard to write about things everyone knows...”. The epigraph Byron chose for *Don Juan*

GAZETTES ✧ For example, the *Daily Universal Register* (later *The Times*) that printed the Court Circular and military lists as well as a journalism.



PANTOMIME ✎ A play bill advertising a performance (about 1832) at the Pavilion Theatre, Stepney, in the East End of London. There were several operatic versions of the Don Juan pantomime given in pre-Napoleonic London that Byron may have attended.

CUMBERLAND ✧ William Augustus, beefy son of George II slaughtered the defeated soldiers of the Scots Jacobite army after the battle of Culloden. Hence, “the butcher”

WELLESLEY ✧ Arthur, Duke of Wellington, whose image appeared on inn-signs and patriotic banners everywhere after his victory over Napoleon in 1815. Byron considered the haughty Duke an icon of Britain’s reactionary policies in post-Napoleonic Europe.

BANQUO’S MONARCHS ✧ A ghostly train of eight future kings of Scotland, all descended from the murdered Banquo, who appear at Macbeth’s banquet table. The “nine farrow” eaten by their mother — here an image of fame consuming its children — is also a quotation from Macbeth (the Witches).

III

Barnave, Brissot, Condorcet, Mirabeau,
 Petion, Cloutz, Danton, Marat, La Fayette,
 Were French, and famous people, as we know:
 And there were others, scarce forgotten yet,
 Joubert, Hoche, Marceau, Lannes, Desaix, Moreau,
 With many of the military set,
 Exceedingly remarkable at times,
 But not at all adapted to my rhymes.

IV

Nelson was once Britannia's god of war,
 And still should be so, but the tide is turn'd;
 There's no more to be said of Trafalgar,
 'T is with our hero quietly inurn'd;
 Because the army's grown more popular,
 At which the naval people are concern'd;
 Besides, the prince is all for the land-service,
 Forgetting Duncan, Nelson, Howe, and Jervis.

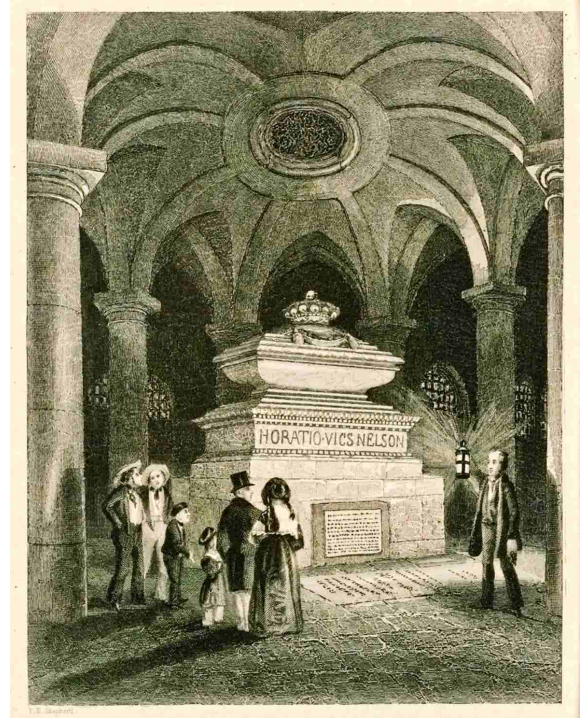
V

Brave men were living before Agamemnon
 And since, exceeding valorous and sage,
 A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;
 But then they shone not on the poet's page,
 And so have been forgotten:—I condemn none,
 But can't find any in the present age
 Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one);
 So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan.

VI

Most epic poets plunge "in medias res"
 (Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road),
 And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
 What went before—by way of episode,
 While seated after dinner at his ease,
 Beside his mistress in some soft abode,
 Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
 Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

BARNEARVE... LA FAYETTE ✦ Heroes and horrors of the French Revolution thirty years before the publication of *Don Juan*.



QUIETLY INURN'D ✦ Nelson's monumental tomb in the crypt of St Pauls (an 1830 etching). Benedetto da Rovezzano, carved the marble sarcophagus for Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII's Chancellor, who died facing charges of treason. Henry then seized it for himself but died before his tomb was ready. Three centuries later, George III donated the orphaned sarcophagus for Nelson's state funeral in 1806.

BRAVE MEN... ✦ Byron's line is the best remembered "riff" on a verse from the fourth book of Odes by the Roman poet Quintus Horatius Flaccus (Horace), a contemporary of Caesar and one of Byron's favourites whom he mentions many times in this and the following Cantos. Horace wrote that many heroes went to their graves unwept and forgotten because they lacked a poet's praise.

IN MEDIAS RES ✦ "Into the middle of the story". This is, in fact, the plan of the heroic epics such as the *Illiad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Argonautica*, and even *Paradise Lost*. Like these other epics, *Don Juan* follows its hero through several loosely linked episodes that seem, at least, to have some historical sanction. But, unlike them, the narrative of Byron's poem is unimportant and best not examined too closely.

VII

That is the usual method, but not mine—
 My way is to begin with the beginning;
 The regularity of my design
 Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
 And therefore I shall open with a line
 (Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
 Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
 And also of his mother, if you'd rather.

VIII

In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,
 Famous for oranges and women—he
 Who has not seen it will be much to pity,
 So says the proverb—and I quite agree;
 Of all the Spanish towns is none more pretty,
 Cadiz perhaps—but that you soon may see;
 Don Juan's parents lived beside the river,
 A noble stream, and call'd the Guadalquivir.

IX

His father's name was J^óse—"Don", of course,—
 A true Hidalgo, free from every stain
 Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source
 Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain;
 A better cavalier ne'er mounted horse,
 Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,
 Than J^óse, who begot our hero, who
 Begot—but that's to come—Well, to renew:

X

His mother was a learned lady, famed
 For every branch of every science known
 In every Christian language ever named,
 With virtues equall'd by her wit alone,
 She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
 And even the good with inward envy groan,
 Finding themselves so very much exceeded
 In their own way by all the things that she did.



THE HAPPY COUPLE ✎ Max Beckman's painting of Odysseus the hero of Homer's second epic poem "ensnared" (he *wanted* it at first) by the nymph Calypso for eight years, delaying his return home. It's in the house of his next lover (Nausicaa) that Odysseus recounts, over dinner, the story of his escape from Troy and his journey so far.

ORANGES AND WOMEN ✧ "*Seville is a beautiful town, though the streets are narrow they are clean, we lodged the house of two Spanish unmarried ladies...*" [Letter, to his mother, 11 Aug. 1809] Byron stayed only three days in Seville at the start of his youthful tour of Europe, but he left with warm parting endearments from Donna Josepha, his hostess — and with a tress of her hair.



THE GUADALQUIVIR ✎ An 18th century view of the river near the Golden Tower of Seville, by Bossuet. Byron's jokey anglicised pronunciation — he keeps it up throughout the poem — completes an unlikely rhyme.

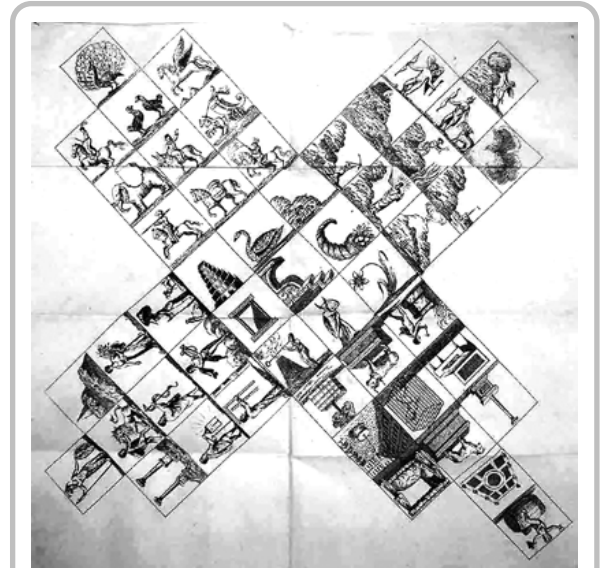
GOTHIC GENTLEMEN OF SPAIN ✧ A Spanish Hidalgo was of "pure blood". He had no tinge of Moorish or Jewish ancestors but traced his family line much earlier to the period when Spain was ruled by the Visigoths. Byron's letters show him entranced, however, by the exotic beauty of dark-eyed Spanish women whose blood-line was altogether more interesting.

XI

Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart
 All Calderon and greater part of Lopé,
 So that if any actor miss'd his part
 She could have served him for the prompter's copy;
 For her Feinagle's were an useless art,
 And he himself obliged to shut up shop — he
 Could never make a memory so fine as
 That which adorn'd the brain of Donna Inez.

XII

Her favourite science was the mathematical,
 Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,
 Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic all,
 Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity;
 In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
 A prodigy — her morning dress was dimity,
 Her evening silk, or, in the summer, muslin,
 And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.



FEINAGLES ✎ Gregor von Feinagle, a mysterious German Professor and whist expert, visited London in 1812 to sell subscription lectures on a "system" for improving memory. This illustration of his "topographic" mnemonic — where memory prompts are organised as if in a floor-plan — is from his 1812 book *The Art of Memory*

CALDERON...LOPÉ ✧ Prolific Spanish dramatists of the 17th century

ATTIC ✧ Dry, laconic, delicate. Perhaps not very funny.

☞ She knew the Latin...



AUTOBIOGRAPHY ✎ In 1817, before he began *Don ~~X~~ Juan*, Byron had drafted a novel — never published — that his friend Cam Hobhouse described as a "transparent recounting of the separation with a Spanish setting". In the novel, Lady Byron figured as "Donna Josepha" (q.v.); Byron's character was called "Don Julian".

Hobhouse among others urged Byron to drop the portrait of the Inez/José marriage from his draft of *Don ~~X~~ Juan*. They thought it a too-obvious reference to Annabelle and himself. It has some resemblance, too, to the marriage of Catherine Gordon of Gight — Byron's tempestuous mother — and his run-away wastrel of a father, "Mad Jack", who abandoned his family and died when Byron was only three.

Douglas Fairbanks' final, funny, self-referential film, *The Private Life of Don Juan*, is available free from the Internet Archive.

XIII

⌚ 5'44"

She knew the Latin—that is, “the Lord’s prayer,”
 And Greek—the alphabet—I’m nearly sure;
 She read some French romances here and there,
 Although her mode of speaking was not pure;
 For native Spanish she had no great care,
 At least her conversation was obscure;
 Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,
 As if she deem’d that mystery would ennoble ’em.

XIV

She liked the English and the Hebrew tongue,
 And said there was analogy between ’em;
 She proved it somehow out of sacred song,
 But I must leave the proofs to those who’ve seen ’em;
 But this I heard her say, and can’t be wrong
 And all may think which way their judgments lean ’em,
 “’T is strange—the Hebrew noun which means ’I am,’
 The English always used to govern d — n.”

XV

Some women use their tongues—she “look’d” a lecture,
 Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily,
 An all-in-all sufficient self-director,
 Like the lamented late Sir Samuel Romilly,
 The Law’s expounder, and the State’s corrector,
 Whose suicide was almost an anomaly—
 One sad example more, that “All is vanity”
 (The jury brought their verdict in “Insanity”).

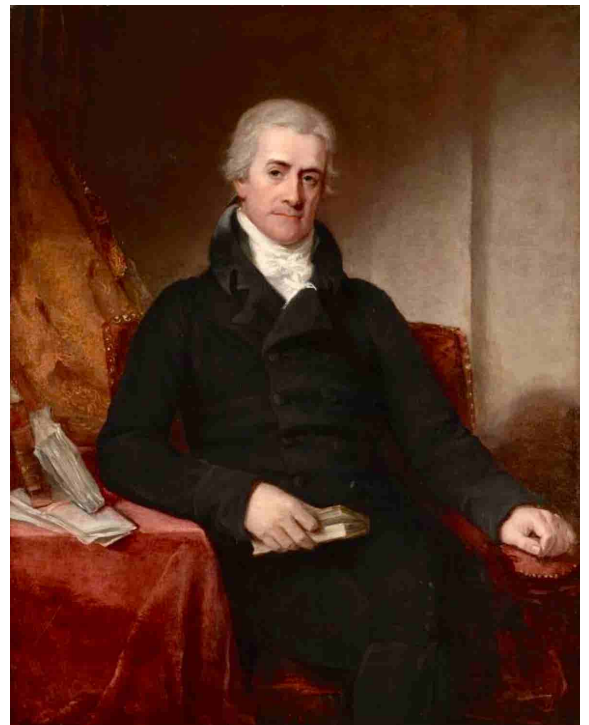
XVI

In short, she was a walking calculation,
 Miss Edgeworth’s novels stepping from their covers,
 Or Mrs. Trimmer’s books on education,
 Or “Coelebs’ Wife” set out in quest of lovers,
 Morality’s prim personification,
 In which not Envy’s self a flaw discovers;
 To others’ share let “female errors fall,”
 For she had not even one—the worst of all.

HER THOUGHTS WERE THEOREMS ✧ “Lady Byron had good ideas, but could never express them; wrote poetry also, but it was only good by accident. Her letters were always enigmatical, often unintelligible. She was governed by what she called fixed rules and principles squared mathematically.” Byron quoted by Thomas Moore.

ANALOGY BETWEEN ’EM ✧ The pseudo-etymological derivation of modern languages from ancient Hebrew is a pious but baseless speculation.

THE HEBREW NOUN ✧ The Hebrew divine name *Yahweh*, anglicised as “Jehovah”, may derive from the verb *hāwāh* to be or exist i.e. ‘he that is’. So B. is talking about the imprecation “God Damn”. It’s ironic that this is an observation by the sanctimonious Dona Inez. The Tory government, reacting to the “Peterloo Massacre” in 1819, which seemed to them to herald a Jacobin rebellion in England, had adopted draconian penalties for blasphemy and for seditious libel. *Don Juan* plausibly contains both. Although never prosecuted, the poem was denied copyright protection by the Crown, which only led to repeated piracy that ensured its wide dissemination.



SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY ✧ Solicitor-General of England, a liberal and a legal reformer. Byron’s family retained Romilly as an advisor but (unethically, he claimed forgetfully) he agreed to advise Annabelle on the separation. He even had a hand in “correcting” Annabelle’s letter to Byron demanding separation. Byron never forgave him. When Romilly suicided in November, 1818, following the death of his wife, Byron inserted this bitter verse over John Murray’s and Cam Hobhouse’s strong objections.

COELEBS’ WIFE ✧ *Coelebs In Search of a Wife* was a popular book by Hanna Moore that told the story of Coelebs’ search for the perfect wife: the image of his dead mother. A Coelebs’ Wife was therefore the perfect woman. Byron avoided his own mother whose temper was mercurial, although he wrote to her diligently during his youthful tour of the continent.

XVII

Oh! she was perfect past all parallel—
 Of any modern female saint's comparison;
 So far above the cunning powers of hell,
 Her guardian angel had given up his garrison;
 Even her minutest motions went as well
 As those of the best time-piece made by Harrison:
 In virtues nothing earthly could surpass her,
 Save thine "incomparable oil," Macassar!

XVIII

Perfect she was, but as perfection is
 Insipid in this naughty world of ours,
 Where our first parents never learn'd to kiss
 Till they were exiled from their earlier bowers,
 Where all was peace, and innocence, and bliss
 (I wonder how they got through the twelve hours),
 Don José, like a lineal son of Eve,
 Went plucking various fruit without her leave.

XIX

He was a mortal of the careless kind,
 With no great love for learning, or the learn'd,
 Who chose to go where'er he had a mind,
 And never dream'd his lady was concern'd;
 The world, as usual, wickedly inclined
 To see a kingdom or a house o'erturn'd,
 Whisper'd he had a mistress, some said "two"—
 But for domestic quarrels "one" will do.

XX

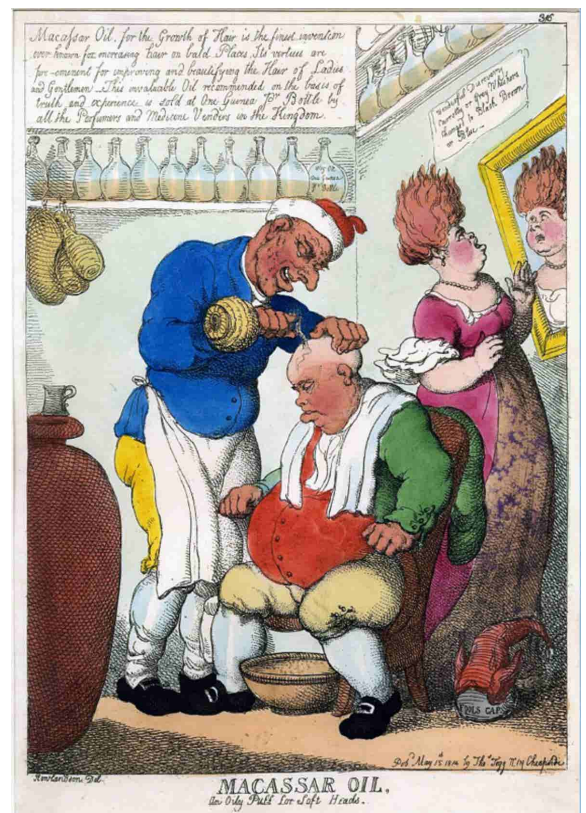
Now Donna Inez had, with all her merit,
 A great opinion of her own good qualities;
 Neglect, indeed, requires a saint to bear it,
 And such, indeed, she was in her moralities;
 But then she had a devil of a spirit,
 And sometimes mix'd up fancies with realities,
 And let few opportunities escape
 Of getting her liege lord into a scrape.

FEMALE ERRORS ✧ A quote from *The Rape of the Lock*, by Alexander Pope (whom Byron admired), an earlier comic mock-epic.

If to her share some female errors
 fall,
 Look on her face and you'll forget
 them all.

(Book II: 17-18)

HARRISON'S TIMEPIECE ✧ Captain James Cook carried a (heavy) watch invented by John Harrison on his first voyage to the Pacific to confirm its accuracy in helping to determine longitude during extended sea voyages. Harrison had perfected the mechanism over 45 years of repeated successful demonstrations in an effort to win a public prize that Parliament continually declined to award. He secured the prize only in 1773 after the personal intervention of King George III.



INCOMPARABLE MACASSAR ✧ Named for the place where the ingredients were sourced—Makassa, the main port of the island of Sulawesi ("the Celebes") in Indonesia—Rowlandson's "incomparable oil" was patent-medicine puffery, as Thomas Rowlandson's 1814 cartoon explains. The anti-Macassar, often a sort of lace doily, protected chair-backs from its greasy stains.

INSIPID PERFECTION ✧ At an early point in their intermittent "courtship", Annabelle Millbanke composed a memorandum of the qualities she expected in a husband that her aunt, Lady Melbourne, forwarded to Byron. He returned the document observing — accurately enough, it turned out — that Annabelle seemed to have been "systematically Clarissa Harlowed into an awkward kind of correctness" by her upbringing. (Clarissa was the very pious heroine of a very long novel by Samuel Richardson).

XXI

This was an easy matter with a man
 Oft in the wrong, and never on his guard;
 And even the wisest, do the best they can,
 Have moments, hours, and days, so unprepared,
 That you might “brain them with their lady’s fan;”
 And sometimes ladies hit exceeding hard,
 And fans turn into falchions in fair hands,
 And why and wherefore no one understands.

XXII

’T is pity learnéd virgins ever wed
 With persons of no sort of education,
 Or gentlemen, who, though well born and bred,
 Grow tired of scientific conversation:
 I don’t choose to say much upon this head,
 I’m a plain man, and in a single station,
 But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
 Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck’d you all?

XXIII

Don Jósé and his lady quarrell’d—”why”,
 Not any of the many could divine,
 Though several thousand people chose to try,
 ’T was surely no concern of theirs nor mine;
 I loathe that low vice—curiosity;
 But if there’s anything in which I shine,
 ’T is in arranging all my friends’ affairs,
 Not having of my own domestic cares.

XXIV

And so I interfered, and with the best
 Intentions, but their treatment was not kind;
 I think the foolish people were possess’d,
 For neither of them could I ever find,
 Although their porter afterwards confess’d—
 But that’s no matter, and the worst’s behind,
 For little Juan o’er me threw, down stairs,
 A pail of housemaid’s water unawares.

A MORTAL OF THE CARELESS KIND ✧ Byron had been ill-behaved in his brief marriage but, like Don José, he “never dream’d” that his wife and her parents were engineering a separation until he received a letter from her father two weeks after she had gone to stay with them in January, 1816.

OFT IN THE WRONG ✧ Byron could be frank about his own shortcomings. Where women were concerned there were many: he spent much of his short life searching for love in the wrong places. But hypocrisy was not among them.

BRAIN THEM ✧ A quote from *Henry IV, Part One*. Hotspur threatens a fainthearted nobleman with the punishment most suited to a wimp.



LEARNÉD VIRGINS ✧ Richard Samuel’s picture of *Nine Living Muses in the Temple of Apollo* depicts accomplished women of the Georgian period including Catherine Macaulay (centre right with turban) and Hanna Moore, author of *Coelebs’ Wife* (reading, right foreground).

HEN-PECK’D ✧ During Byron’s brief marriage, *he* bullied and intimidated his intellectual wife, not *vice versa*, although there was also affection, on both sides. Byron was attracted to strong, self-assured, well-read women such as Lady Melbourne, Madame de Staël, Mary Godwin (Shelley), the pretty young Countess Guccioli and to passionate Italian women who shared his sexual energy.

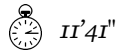
NOT ANY OF THE MANY COULD DIVINE ✧ Rumours of cruelty, infidelity and incest with his half-sister, Augusta, swirled around the Byron marriage, helped on, possibly, by the indiscretions of the incendiary, nutty, Lady Caroline Lamb, Byron’s former lover. Beset with debts and bailiffs and frustrated by slow progress in the sale of Newstead Abbey — his chief inheritance — Byron was moody, misbehaved, drunken and often cruel to his bride. There is little doubt that he had earlier had an incestuous affair with Augusta. But no proofs ever reached the public.

I INTERFERED ✧ The character of a narrator who has some incidental role in the action disappears soon after this. By the time Juan departs on his adventures, Byron is addressing his audience directly.

XXV

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,
 And mischief-making monkey from his birth;
 His parents ne'er agreed except in doting
 Upon the most unquiet imp on earth;
 Instead of quarrelling, had they been but both in
 Their senses, they'd have sent young master forth
 To school, or had him soundly whipp'd at home,
 To teach him manners for the time to come.

XXVI



Don José and the Donna Inez led
 For some time an unhappy sort of life,
 Wishing each other, not divorced, but dead;
 They lived respectably as man and wife,
 Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,
 And gave no outward signs of inward strife,
 Until at length the smother'd fire broke out,
 And put the business past all kind of doubt.

XXVII

For Inez call'd some druggists and physicians,
 And tried to prove her loving lord was "mad";
 But as he had some lucid intermissions,
 She next decided he was only "bad";
 Yet when they ask'd her for her depositions,
 No sort of explanation could be had,
 Save that her duty both to man and God
 Required this conduct—which seem'd very odd.

XXVIII

She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,
 And open'd certain trunks of books and letters,
 All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;
 And then she had all Seville for abettors,
 Besides her good old grandmother (who doted);
 The hearers of her case became repeaters,
 Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,
 Some for amusement, others for old grudges.

HIS BIRTH ✧ Byron doesn't trouble himself with dates. It appears that the main action of the poem takes place shortly before the Napoleonic era, but not much. There is just one hint in [Stanza XCII](#) that Juan, who is sixteen at the end of this Canto, must have been born in the early 1770s to witness the hot-air balloon craze that swept Europe in the latter part of the 1780s.

MISCHIEF -MAKING

MONKEY 🐒 The young Byron – aged seven in this idealised portrait commissioned by his mother — fit this description, too. At his grandmother's house in Banff, Scotland, the locals called him "that little deevil Gordie Byron." At age 13 he was sent to the Harrow school where the bright, good-looking boy who swam and played cricket to spite his lameness — but was also disruptive, lazy and self-centred — was never "soundly whipp'd" by the indulgent masters.



MAD ✧ Like Inez, Annabelle Byron—or, rather, her mother—while preparing grounds for separation behind Byron's back, had sought the opinion of Byron's physician whether he might be insane. He initially gave his opinion to the contrary but then refused to discuss his patient's condition further.

HER DUTY ✧ Annabelle, too, in a letter to Augusta Leigh, cited her "duty to God" to proceed with the separation from Byron whom she considered abusive and unfaithful to her — or worse — although she evidently remained emotionally attached to him.

A JOURNAL WHERE HIS FAULTS WERE NOTED ✧ Annabelle had composed an analytical "character" of Byron shortly after his first, unsuccessful proposal, that she passed on to him through her aunt, Lady Melbourne either as an explanation of her rejection of him or perhaps as a signal of her continuing interest. Later, in support of the separation claims she drafted a document listing his abuses, bizarre behaviour and cruelty to her.

XXIX

And then this best and weakest woman bore
 With such serenity her husband's woes,
 Just as the Spartan ladies did of yore,
 Who saw their spouses kill'd, and nobly chose
 Never to say a word about them more—
 Calmly she heard each calumny that rose,
 And saw "his" agonies with such sublimity,
 That all the world exclaim'd, "What magnanimity!"

XXX

No doubt this patience, when the world is damning us,
 Is philosophic in our former friends;
 'T is also pleasant to be deem'd magnanimous,
 The more so in obtaining our own ends;
 And what the lawyers call a "*malus animus*"
 Conduct like this by no means comprehends;
 Revenge in person's certainly no virtue,
 But then 't is not "my" fault, if "others" hurt you.

XXXI

And if your quarrels should rip up old stories,
 And help them with a lie or two additional,
 I'm not to blame, as you well know—no more is
 Any one else—they were become traditional;
 Besides, their resurrection aids our glories
 By contrast, which is what we just were wishing all:
 And science profits by this resurrection—
 Dead scandals form good subjects for dissection.

XXXII

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,
 Then their relations, who made matters worse.
 ('T were hard to tell upon a like occasion
 To whom it may be best to have recourse—
 I can't say much for friend or yet relation):
 The lawyers did their utmost for divorce,
 But scarce a fee was paid on either side
 Before, unluckily, Don José died.



SPARTAN LADIES ✎ They were tough. According to the Roman writer Plutarch, Spartan mothers gave their sons departing for war the unsentimental instruction to return "either with your shield or on it", meaning they should come home either victorious or dead. Le Barbier's 1805 painting *drips*, however, with sentimental classicism

MALUS ANIMUS ✧ Intention to harm

FRIENDS, RELATIONS ✧ Byron's friends, including Hobhouse (below) and Mme de Staël, his sister Augusta (who remained friends with Annabelle) and his cousin George (who took Annabelle's part) tried to bring about a reconciliation. Their efforts availed little in the face of Annabelle's rigid adherence to her "principles" and her parents' advice.



JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE ✎ Byron's closest friend from his days at Cambridge University, during his subsequent European tour, his best man at the small, hasty wedding to Annabelle and advisor during the separation. Hobhouse became a celebrated radical MP but eventually rose to senior government office and ended his career as a Baron. He played an inglorious role in the destruction of Byron's papers, including a "memoir", after the poet's death.

XXXIII

He died: and most unluckily, because,
 According to all hints I could collect
 From counsel learned in those kinds of laws
 (Although their talk's obscure and circumspect),
 His death contrived to spoil a charming cause;
 A thousand pities also with respect
 To public feeling, which on this occasion
 Was manifested in a great sensation.

XXXIV

But, ah! he died; and buried with him lay
 The public feeling and the lawyers' fees:
 His house was sold, his servants sent away,
 A Jew took one of his two mistresses,
 A priest the other—at least so they say:
 I ask'd the doctors after his disease—
 He died of the slow fever call'd the tertian,
 And left his widow to her own aversion.

XXXV

Yet José was an honourable man,
 That I must say who knew him very well;
 Therefore his frailties I'll no further scan
 Indeed there were not many more to tell;
 And if his passions now and then outran
 Discretion, and were not so peaceable
 As Numa's (who was also named Pompilius),
 He had been ill brought up, and was born bilious.

XXXVI

Whate'er might be his worthlessness or worth,
 Poor fellow! he had many things to wound him.
 Let's own—since it can do no good on earth—
 It was a trying moment that which found him
 Standing alone beside his desolate hearth,
 Where all his household gods lay shiver'd round him:
 No choice was left his feelings or his pride,
 Save death or Doctors' Commons - so he died.

A CHARMING CAUSE ✧ Divorce, which “charmed” the lawyers with rich fees for a public dissection of scandal, bitterness and loss.

A FEVER CALL'D THE TERTIAN ✧ A tertian fever is one that recurs every two days or so; it is typical of malaria.



DOCTORS COMMONS ✧ “...the place where they grant marriage-licenses to love-sick couples, and divorces to unfaithful ones...” (Charles Dickens). Before the reforms of 1857, divorce was a scandalous forensic process that began with a suit of adultery followed by a grant of annulment issued by this Court — formally, *The College of Advocates and Doctors of Law* — whose powers depended on arcane Roman (or ‘Civil’) Law that encompassed what the Church of England forbade.

NUMA ✧ Rome’s legendary second King, succeeding Romulus, whose reign was reputed a golden age of peace and prosperity

HIS DESOLATE HEARTH ✧ Byron wrote two years after his exile to his friend Thomas Moore that the pain of separation was worse than assassination or poison (“the dagger or the bowl”). The surprise of Annabelle’s demand for separation and the accusations that he felt were exaggerated and unjust left him devastated, “standing alone beside his desolate hearth, where all his household gods lay shiver’d round him.”

XXXVII

Dying intestate, Juan was sole heir
 To a chancery suit, and messuages, and lands,
 Which, with a long minority and care,
 Promised to turn out well in proper hands:
 Inez became sole guardian, which was fair,
 And answer'd but to nature's just demands;
 An only son left with an only mother
 Is brought up much more wisely than another.


XXXVIII

Sagest of women, even of widows, she
 Resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon,
 And worthy of the noblest pedigree
 (His sire was of Castile, his dam from Aragon):
 Then for accomplishments of chivalry,
 In case our lord the king should go to war again,
 He learn'd the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,
 And how to scale a fortress—or a nunnery.

XXXIX

But that which Donna Inez most desired,
 And saw into herself each day before all
 The learned tutors whom for him she hired,
 Was, that his breeding should be strictly moral;
 Much into all his studies she inquired,
 And so they were submitted first to her, all,
 Arts, sciences, no branch was made a mystery
 To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.

XL

 18'05"

The languages, especially the dead,
 The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,
 The arts, at least all such as could be said
 To be the most remote from common use,
 In all these he was much and deeply read;
 But not a page of any thing that's loose,
 Or hints continuation of the species,
 Was ever suffer'd, lest he should grow vicious.



MESSAUGES AND LANDS ✎ Messaues are a house and adjoining buildings. Byron's inheritance at age 10 from his grand-uncle was the rambling, decrepit, haunted Newstead Abbey that he finally sold while in exile only shortly before composing *Don Juan*. The proceeds barely paid his debts. It is the scene of the last Cantos of *Don Juan*.

A CHANCERY SUIT ✧ The Court of Chancery — made infamous a generation later by Dickens' *Bleak House* — granted probate on contested wills.

AN ONLY SON ✧ Byron was an "only son", just as his wife was an only daughter as were: his only legitimate child, Ada, his natural daughter Allegra, his half-sister, his mother and his sister's mother. Bryon thought this significant: "...the fiercest animals have the rarest number in their litters."



CASTILE AND ARAGON ✎ The mediaeval kingdoms that divided the territory of Spain were united by the marriage of Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon in the late 15th century but the territorial connections of the old noble houses lingered into modern times.

XLI

His classic studies made a little puzzle,
 Because of filthy loves of gods and goddesses,
 Who in the earlier ages raised a bustle,
 But never put on pantaloons or bodices;
 His reverend tutors had at times a tussle,
 And for their “Æneids”, “Iliads”, and “Odysseys”,
 Were forced to make an odd sort of apology,
 For Donna Inez dreaded the Mythology.

XLII

Ovid’s a rake, as half his verses show him,
 Anacreon’s morals are a still worse sample,
 Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
 I don’t think Sappho’s “Ode” a good example,
 Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn
 Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample:
 But Virgil’s songs are pure, except that horrid one
 Beginning with “Formosum Pastor Corydon”.

XLIII

Lucretius’ irreligion is too strong,
 For early stomachs, to prove wholesome food;
 I can’t help thinking Juvenal was wrong,
 Although no doubt his real intent was good,
 For speaking out so plainly in his song,
 So much indeed as to be downright rude;
 And then what proper person can be partial
 To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?

XLIV

Juan was taught from out the best edition,
 Expurgated by learned men, who place
 Judiciously, from out the schoolboy’s vision,
 The grosser parts; but, fearful to deface
 Too much their modest bard by this omission,
 And pitying sore his mutilated case,
 They only add them all in an appendix,
 Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index;

ÆNEID, ILIAD AND ODYSSEY ✧ The three greatest ancient epic poems are historical adventures, interspersed with speeches, clever tales, a bit of butchery and a lot of feasting. There are few salacious bits. The *mythology* of Greece—the stories of the Gods, the Titans, and myriad local spirits of rivers and trees; of man’s relationships to the Gods and of the Gods’ sexual and martial interference in human affairs—belongs to the ancient *lyric* tradition and to the long poems of Homer’s contemporary, Hesiod. There, we find quite a bit of naughtiness.

OVID, CATULLUS, SAPPHO ✧ Publius Ovidius Naso (Ovid), and Gaius Valerius Catullus, who lived in the last century before the common era, are two of the greatest lyricists ever. But Ovid’s collection, the *Art of Love*, was too racy for the strait-laced emperor Augustus who sent the poet into exile. The poems of Catullus—who was disappointed in love, bisexual (like Byron) and libidinous—were condemned as “immoral” by the renowned orator and lawyer, Cicero. Sappho, who lived five centuries earlier, was a lyricist from the Greek island of Lesbos. Her work was much-admired in ancient times, but the “Ode” that Byron mentions is the only one of her poems to survive complete; quoted in a critical essay on *The Sublime* attributed to “Longinus”, an unidentified author from the first century C.E. Sappho, who seems also to have had male lovers, gave her name to sapphic (lesbian) love.

VIRGIL’S SONGS ✧ The Roman poet who wrote the epic *Æneid* also wrote many shorter works including a *pastoral* that tells of the love of “The handsome shepherd Corydon” for a beautiful boy. Byron, too, had liaisons (probably not carnal) with beautiful boys at Cambridge and later (certainly carnal) during his year-long youthful sojourn in Greece. Sodomy was a capital crime in 18th century England.

LuCRETIUS ✧ Titus Lucretius Carus, writing about the same time as Catullus and Julius Caesar, offered a materialist account of the nature of the world and gave no role to the supernatural powers of the rather silly official Roman pantheon.

JUVENAL ✧ Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis, was a savage critic of Roman society a century or more before the common era. Most of his sixteen poetic satires—critical of pagan behaviour, although perhaps sometimes tongue-in-cheek—were preserved by monkish copyists of the Christian era. He had many modern imitators especially Samuel Johnson whose two greatest poems *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* were based on Juvenal’s Satires III and X.

MARTIAL ✧ Marcus Valerius Martialis, a Roman poet from the first century of the common era. A genius of epigram; short, barbed, often obscene, frequently hilarious verses that still amuse and titillate two thousand years later. The NY Review of Books summarised a recent translation of the epigrams as celebrating “recurring themes, such as adult homosexuality, baldness, body odor, cunnilingus, fellatio, misogyny, and pederasty.”

EXPURGATED ✧ As Byron’s first biographer, Thomas Moore, pointed out there was such an edition of Martial, published in Amsterdam in 1701. The madness continued into the last century when Loeb’s Library published an English translation of the epigrams that left all the naughty bits in *Italian*.

XLV

For there we have them all “at one fell swoop,”
 Instead of being scatter’d through the Pages;
 They stand forth marshall’d in a handsome troop,
 To meet the ingenuous youth of future ages,
 Till some less rigid editor shall stoop
 To call them back into their separate cages,
 Instead of standing staring all together,
 Like garden gods—and not so decent either.

XLVI

The Missal too (it was the family Missal)
 Was ornamented in a sort of way
 Which ancient mass-books often are, and this all
 Kinds of grotesques illumined; and how they,
 Who saw those figures on the margin kiss all,
 Could turn their optics to the text and pray,
 Is more than I know—But Don Juan’s mother
 Kept this herself, and gave her son another.

XLVII

Sermons he read, and lectures he endured,
 And homilies, and lives of all the saints;
 To Jerome and to Chrysostom inured,
 He did not take such studies for restraints;
 But how faith is acquired, and then ensured,
 So well not one of the aforesaid paints
 As Saint Augustine in his fine Confessions,
 Which make the reader envy his transgressions.

XLVIII

This, too, was a seal’d book to little Juan—
 I can’t but say that his mamma was right,
 If such an education was the true one.
 She scarcely trusted him from out her sight;
 Her maids were old, and if she took a new one,
 You might be sure she was a perfect fright;
 She did this during even her husband’s life—
 I recommend as much to every wife.

GARDEN GODS ✎ Perhaps Byron was thinking of Canova’s sculpture of the Three Graces created initially for Napoleon’s empress Josephine in 1814 and re-commissioned in that year by John Russell the Duke of Bedford who saw the original in Canova’s Rome studio. Subsequently much copied for garden ornament. This is the Russell version, now in Edinburgh.



FIGURES ON THE MARGIN ✎ Decorations on the bottom margin of the Macclesfield Psalter, Psalm 119. Riding the ass backwards was a common mediæval punishment for minor crimes

JEROME AND CHRYSOSTOM ✧ Influential 4th Century theologians of Christianity. Both known for literary achievements, ascetic lives and attacks on the licentiousness of pagans. Not, of course, light reading.

AUGUSTINE’S CONFESSIONS ✧ Aurelius Augustinus, later bishop of Hippo in North Africa during the disintegration of Roman rule and the invasion of the Vandals (4th Century), was a prolific writer and one of the greatest Christian philosophers. His *Confessions*, reflecting on his roaring pagan youth, is a landmark of auto-biography.



ENVIABLE TRANSGRESSIONS ✎ Details from Thomas Couture’s lurid vision of Ancients behaving badly (*Romans of the Decadence*, 1847).


XLIX

Young Juan wax'd in goodliness and grace;
 At six a charming child, and at eleven
 With all the promise of as fine a face
 As e'er to man's maturer growth was given:
 He studied steadily, and grew apace,
 And seem'd, at least, in the right road to heaven,
 For half his days were pass'd at church, the other
 Between his tutors, confessor, and mother.

L

At six, I said, he was a charming child,
 At twelve he was a fine, but quiet boy;
 Although in infancy a little wild,
 They tamed him down amongst them: to destroy
 His natural spirit not in vain they toil'd,
 At least it seem'd so; and his mother's joy
 Was to declare how sage, and still, and steady,
 Her young philosopher was grown already.

LI

 23'02"

I had my doubts, perhaps I have them still,
 But what I say is neither here nor there:
 I knew his father well, and have some skill
 In character—but it would not be fair
 From sire to son to augur good or ill:
 He and his wife were an ill-sorted pair—
 But scandal's my aversion—I protest
 Against all evil speaking, even in jest.

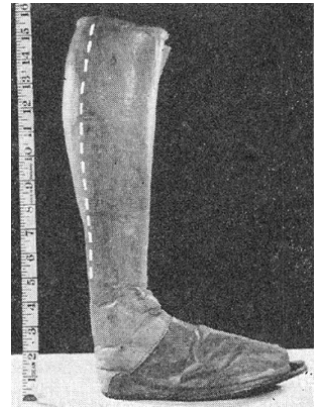
LII

For my part I say nothing—nothing—but
 “This” I will say—my reasons are my own—
 That if I had an only son to put
 To school (as God be praised that I have none),
 'T is not with Donna Inez I would shut
 Him up to learn his catechism alone,
 No—no—I'd send him out betimes to college,
 For there it was I pick'd up my own knowledge.

GOODLINESS AND GRACE ✦ Compare Luke 2:40 “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him”. The description of young Juan is an idealised portrait of Byron who was charming, clever, handsome... but had a lame right leg that gave him a sliding gait.

BYRON'S LAMENESS

✦ His deformity was not a club-foot as the *diabolic* myths suggested. In 1959, Denis Browne, an orthopaedic surgeon who examined Byron's prosthetic legging and boot insert reported in the Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine that Byron suffered a congenital dysplasia (underdevelopment) of his right leg below the knee which left him with a withered calf muscle and a foot that turned slightly sideways on itself (metatarsal varus).



I HAD MY DOUBTS ✦ The narrator speaks to the reader but the “Spanish gentleman” is soon overtaken by Byron's own voice



COLLEGE ✦ A view from the rear of the original classroom building at Harrow College where Byron learned Latin, Greek and cricket.

LIII

For there one learns—'t is not for me to boast,
 Though I acquired—but I pass over *that*,
 As well as all the Greek I since have lost:
 I say that there's the place—but "*Verbum sat*".
 I think I pick'd up too, as well as most,
 Knowledge of matters—but no matter *what*—
 I never married—but, I think, I know
 That sons should not be educated so.

LIV

Young Juan now was sixteen years of age,
 Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit: he seem'd
 Active, though not so sprightly, as a page;
 And everybody but his mother deem'd
 Him almost man; but she flew in a rage
 And bit her lips (for else she might have scream'd)
 If any said so, for to be precocious
 Was in her eyes a thing the most atrocious.

LV

Amongst her numerous acquaintance, all
 Selected for discretion and devotion,
 There was the Donna Julia, whom to call
 Pretty were but to give a feeble notion
 Of many charms in her as natural
 As sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean,
Her zone to Venus, or his bow to Cupid
 (But this last simile is trite and stupid).

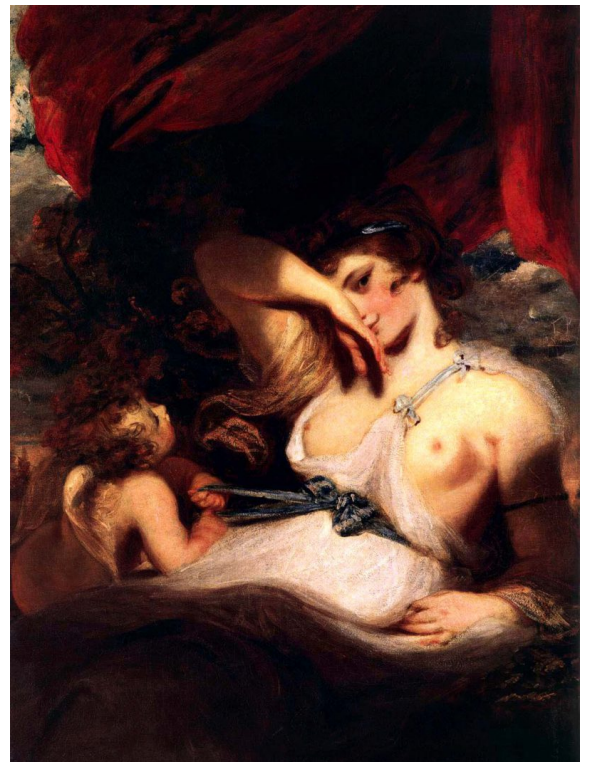
LVI

The darkness of her Oriental eye
 Accorded with her Moorish origin
 (Her blood was not all Spanish, by the by;
 In Spain, you know, this is a sort of sin);
 When proud Granada fell, and, forced to fly,
Boabdil wept, of Donna Julia's kin
 Some went to Africa, some stay'd in Spain,
 Her great-great-grandmamma chose to remain.

VERBUM SAT ✧ Short for *verbum sat sapienti* meaning "a word to the wise is enough". Byron loves to hint at his misdemeanours during his years at Trinity College in Cambridge where, in support of a life of enthusiastic dissipation—most of it in London at the plays—he acquired considerable debts to moneylenders. He also found time, however, for reading and the beginnings of his career as a poet.

FLEW IN A RAGE ✧ Byron's father, Captain John Byron, had gambled or drunk the inheritance of his wife, Catherine Gordon, and abandoned her in difficult circumstances to bring up his then-three-year-old son alone. His mother was prone to tantrums and rages that led her son to keep his distance.

DONNA JULIA ✧ Finally, we meet Juan's first Heroine. One scholar of Byron's youthful pilgrimage to Spain, Greece and Turkey has pointed out that the portrait of Julia bears some resemblance to Donna Josepha Beltram, Byron's hostess in Seville.



HER ZONE TO VENUS ♀ The goddess of love wore a girdle or *zone* that made her sexually irresistible. In his painting of *Cupid Untying the Zone of Venus* Sir John Reynolds imagines it as a ribbon that offers very little resistance. In the *Iliad*, however, Homer describes it as a belt (*himas*) engraved with aphrodisiac charms.

LVII

She married (I forget the pedigree)
 With an Hidalgo, who transmitted down
 His blood less noble than such blood should be;
 At such alliances his sires would frown,
 In that point so precise in each degree
 That they bred “in and in”, as might be shown,
 Marrying their cousins—nay, their aunts, and nieces,
 Which always spoils the breed, if it increases.

LVIII

This heathenish cross restored the breed again,
 Ruin'd its blood, but much improved its flesh;
 For from a root the ugliest in Old Spain
 Sprung up a branch as beautiful as fresh;
 The sons no more were short, the daughters plain:
 But there's a rumour which I fain would hush,
 'T is said that Donna Julia's grandmamma
 Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.

LIX

However this might be, the race went on
 Improving still through every generation,
 Until it centred in an only son,
 Who left an only daughter; my narration
 May have suggested that this single one
 Could be but Julia (whom on this occasion
 I shall have much to speak about), and she
 Was married, charming, chaste, and twenty-three.

LX

Her eye (I'm very fond of handsome eyes)
 Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire
 Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise
 Flash'd an expression more of pride than ire,
 And love than either; and there would arise
 A something in them which was not desire,
 But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul
 Which struggled through and chasten'd down the whole.



BOABDIL WEPT ✎ Abu-'Abdullah, called Boabdil by the Spanish, was the last Moorish King of Granada. Overthrown by the Christian kingdoms of [Castile and Aragon](#) in 1492, he fled to Africa. On a nearby hill, now called *El Último Suspiro del Moro*—the Moor's Last Sigh—he paused to look back at his city and wept for his loss. His mother is supposed to have sneered: “You do well to weep like a woman for what you could not defend like a man.”

A SORT OF SIN ✎ See the note on page 4 on mixed race among the Spanish nobility.



AS BEAUTIFUL AS FRESH ✎ Romero de Torres' painting *La Fuensanta* (Woman at the Well) that figured on the 100 Pesta note, when Spain had its own currency, typifies the dark-eyed *Morena* whose features recalled the country's Moorish inheritance.

AN ONLY DAUGHTER ✎ Byron was slightly preoccupied by the idea of [only children](#).

LXI

Her glossy hair was cluster'd o'er a brow
 Bright with intelligence, and fair, and smooth;
 Her eyebrow's shape was like th' aerial bow,
 Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth,
 Mounting at times to a transparent glow,
 As if her veins ran lightning; she, in sooth,
 Possess'd an air and grace by no means common:
 Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman.

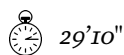
LXII

Wedded she was some years, and to a man
 Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty;
 And yet, I think, instead of such a ONE
 'T were better to have two of five-and-twenty,
 Especially in countries near the sun:
 And now I think on 't, "mi vien in mente,"
 Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
 Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

LXIII

'T is a sad thing, I cannot choose but say,
 And all the fault of that indecent sun,
 Who cannot leave alone our helpless clay,
 But will keep baking, broiling, burning on,
 That howsoever people fast and pray,
 The flesh is frail, and so the soul undone:
 What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,
 Is much more common where the climate's sultry.

LXIV



Happy the nations of the moral North!
 Where all is virtue, and the winter season
 Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth
 ('T was snow that brought St. Anthony to reason);
 Where juries cast up what a wife is worth,
 By laying whate'er sum in mulct they please on
 The lover, who must pay a handsome price,
 Because it is a marketable vice.

A DUMPY WOMAN ✧ Ungallant! Byron, at 1.74m (5ft 8½in) was not tall and all his life tended to put on weight.

NEAR THE SUN ✧ Byron explains reason for spreading the bounty this way in the last couplet of the next stanza. The connection between sunny lands and sexual freedom is a sort of Byronic cliché, no doubt confirmed for him during his youthful journey in Spain, Malta, Greece and Turkey in 1809-10 and certainly practiced during his stay in Venice in 1816-1819

MI VIEN IN MENTE ✧ Italian: "it occurs to me..."

ADULTERY... SULTRY ✧ A rhyme worthy of Noel Coward and a theory that Byron tested repeatedly in personal experiment.

ST ANTHONY ✧ Byron's memory trips-up here. It was the twelfth century monk, St Francis of Assisi, who used the cold to defeat temptation, not St Anthony, a 3rd century ascetic.

A MARKETABLE VICE ✧ A *mulct* is a fine (from the Latin *mulcta*). In Regency England the first step in divorce for reasons of adultery was a civil suit of *Criminal Conversation* bought by the injured husband against his wife's lover in the Court of King's Bench or Common Pleas. Success there meant a fine for the lover and the opportunity for the injured husband to pursue annulment of the marriage in the "ecclesiastical" [civil law courts](#). The final step required an Act of Parliament. Women had no such rights.

LXV

Alfonso was the name of Julia's lord,
 A man well looking for his years, and who
 Was neither much beloved nor yet abhorr'd:
 They lived together, as most people do,
 Suffering each other's foibles by accord,
 And not exactly either "one" or "two";
 Yet he was jealous, though he did not show it,
 For jealousy dislikes the world to know it.

LXVI

Julia was—yet I never could see why—
 With Donna Inez quite a favourite friend;
 Between their tastes there was small sympathy,
 For not a line had Julia ever penn'd:
 Some people whisper but no doubt they lie,
 For malice still imputes some private end)
 That Inez had, ere Don Alfonso's marriage,
Forgot with him her very prudent carriage;

LXVII

And that still keeping up the old connection,
 Which time had lately render'd much more chaste,
 She took his lady also in affection,
 And certainly this course was much the best:
 She flatter'd Julia with her sage protection,
 And complimented Don Alfonso's taste;
 And if she could not (who can?) silence scandal,
 At least she left it a more slender handle.

LXVIII

I can't tell whether Julia saw the affair
 With other people's eyes, or if her own
 Discoveries made, but none could be aware
 Of this, at least no symptom e'er was shown;
 Perhaps she did not know, or did not care,
 Indifferent from the first or callous grown:
 I'm really puzzled what to think or say,
 She kept her counsel in so close a way.

FORGOT WITH HIM ✧ A plot thread that Byron raises once more in [Stanza 176](#) but does not pursue far. It raises the intriguing possibility that Juan is Alfonso's son rather than José's; adding an oedipal colour to their eventual battle over Julia. Of course, it also turns mere priggishness on Inez' part to [hypocrisy](#).

LXIX

Juan she saw, and, as a pretty child,
 Caress'd him often—such a thing might be
 Quite innocently done, and harmless styled,
 When she had twenty years, and thirteen he;
 But I am not so sure I should have smiled
 When he was sixteen, Julia twenty-three;
 These few short years make wondrous alterations,
 Particularly amongst sun-burnt nations.

LXX

Whate'er the cause might be, they had become
 Changed; for the dame grew distant, the youth shy,
 Their looks cast down, their greetings almost dumb,
 And much embarrassment in either eye;
 There surely will be little doubt with some
 That Donna Julia knew the reason why,
 But as for Juan, he had no more notion
 Than he who never saw the sea of ocean.

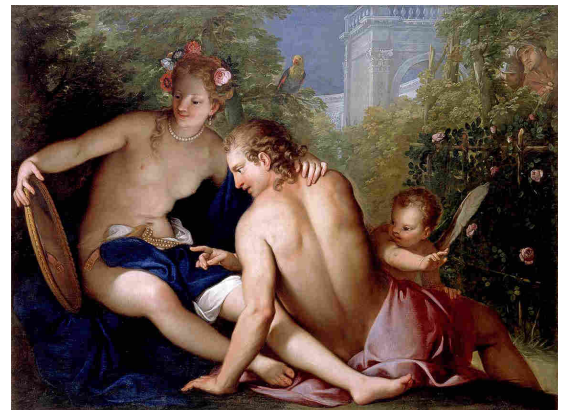
LXXI

Yet Julia's very coldness still was kind,
 And tremulously gentle her small hand
 Withdrew itself from his, but left behind
 A little pressure, thrilling, and so bland
 And slight, so very slight, that to the mind
 'T was but a doubt; but ne'er magician's wand
 Wrought change with all Armida's fairy art
 Like what this light touch left on Juan's heart.

LXXII

And if she met him, though she smiled no more,
 She look'd a sadness sweeter than her smile,
 As if her heart had deeper thoughts in store
 She must not own, but cherish'd more the while
 For that compression in its burning core;
 Even innocence itself has many a wile,
 And will not dare to trust itself with truth,
 And love is taught hypocrisy from youth.

INNOCENTLY DONE ✧ Julia's caresses of the thirteen-year-old Juan may have been innocent but a nine-year-old Byron suffered more harm at the hands of an older woman. His Scottish nurse, Mary (May) Gray who he said beat him until he felt it in his bones, alternated a calvinist religiosity with sexual abuse of the pretty young boy, climbing into his bed to interfere with him. A note written by Bryon's friend Hobhouse after the poet's death suggests the abuse may have continued for some years. The effect on Byron's psyche can only be imagined. We can guess it fed his detestation of religious *hypocrisy* and *cant*. But, like the initially clueless Juan in this passage, the sex-play might also have provoked a precocious sexuality in the young Byron. Gray was dismissed after Byron revealed the assaults to the family attorney and advisor John Hanson. But Hanson never made the nature of Gray's assaults clear to Byron's mother and she delayed firing the woman for several months.



ARMIDA'S FAIRY ART ♣ Armida, the beautiful sorceress of Torquato Tasso's 16th century epic poem *Jerusalem Delivered*—shown here in Gregorio Lazzarini's baroque masterpiece—held the hero Rinaldo in an enchanted garden in a bid to prevent him completing his mission. In Byron's letters, the image is associated with his love affair with Jane Harley, Countess of Oxford in 1812-3, when he stayed in the Harley's country house, Eywood, with the Countess and her beautiful teenaged daughters for weeks at a time. A print of Armida and Rinaldo hung on the wall of his chamber. Tasso's life and brilliant poetic career had much in common with Bryon's, whose 1817 poem *The Lament of Tasso* condemns the Italian author's seven years of imprisonment for extravagant behaviour, deemed "madness".


LXXIII

But passion most dissembles, yet betrays
 Even by its darkness; as the blackest sky
 Foretells the heaviest tempest, it displays
 Its workings through the vainly guarded eye,
 And in whatever aspect it arrays
 Itself, 't is still the same hypocrisy;
 Coldness or anger, even disdain or hate,
 Are masks it often wears, and still too late.

LXXIV

Then there were sighs, the deeper for suppression,
 And stolen glances, sweeter for the theft,
 And burning blushes, though for no transgression,
 Tremblings when met, and restlessness when left;
 All these are little preludes to possession,
 Of which young passion cannot be bereft,
 And merely tend to show how greatly love is
 Embarrass'd at first starting with a novice.

LXXV

 34'23"

Poor Julia's heart was in an awkward state;
 She felt it going, and resolved to make
 The noblest efforts for herself and mate,
 For honour's, pride's, religion's, virtue's sake;
 Her resolutions were most truly great,
 And almost might have made a Tarquin quake:
 She pray'd the Virgin Mary for her grace,
 As being the best judge of a lady's case.

LXXVI

She vow'd she never would see Juan more,
 And next day paid a visit to his mother,
 And look'd extremely at the opening door,
 Which, by the Virgin's grace, let in another;
 Grateful she was, and yet a little sore—
 Again it opens, it can be no other,
 'T is surely Juan now—No! I'm afraid
 That night the Virgin was no further pray'd.



POOR JULIA'S HEART 🍀 In the years 1812-13, the handsome 25-year-old Byron (this 1812 miniature was his favorite) was approaching the apogee of his literary fame in London; verse such as *The Corsair* was selling in unprecedented numbers. He was swept up in overlapping affairs with infatuated married women of the Regency nobility: with the unstable beauty Lady Caroline Lamb; with the sweet, profligate Jane Harley, Lady Oxford (fourteen years his senior); with the pretty but cautious Lady Frances Webster, and; with his easy-going half-sister Augusta Leigh. He was pursued by many others, including Annabelle Millbanke. *Almost* all of this he chronicled in an intimate correspondence with Lady Melbourne, Caroline Lamb's mother-in-law and Annabelle Millbanke's aunt—who had her own colorful history of extramarital adventures. Byron's confessions, evasions and ironic reflections on himself and his lovers in these letters suggest the source of this comic treatment of Julia's desire and self-torment and self-deception.



TARQUIN 🍀 Tarquinius Sextus, the youngest son of Rome's last legendary King, Tarquinius Superbus ("the Proud") raped his cousin's wife, Lucretia who committed suicide in shame. She is held up as an icon of Roman virtue. According to legend, the republican nobility chased the Tarquins from power when the crime was revealed.

LXXVII

She now determined that a virtuous woman
 Should rather face and overcome temptation,
 That flight was base and dastardly, and no man
 Should ever give her heart the least sensation;
 That is to say, a thought beyond the common
 Preference, that we must feel upon occasion
 For people who are pleasanter than others,
 But then they only seem so many brothers.

LXXVIII

And even if by chance—and who can tell?
 The devil's so very sly—she should discover
 That all within was not so very well,
 And, if still free, that such or such a lover
 Might please perhaps, a virtuous wife can quell
 Such thoughts, and be the better when they're over;
 And if the man should ask, 't is but denial:
 I recommend young ladies to make trial.

LXXIX

And then there are such things as love divine,
 Bright and immaculate, unmix'd and pure,
 Such as the angels think so very fine,
 And matrons who would be no less secure,
Platonic, perfect, "just such love as mine;"
 Thus Julia said—and thought so, to be sure;
 And so I'd have her think, were I the man
 On whom her reveries celestial ran.

LXXX

Such love is innocent, and may exist
 Between young persons without any danger.
 A hand may first, and then a lip be kist;
 For my part, to such doings I'm a stranger,
 But hear these freedoms form the utmost list
 Of all o'er which such love may be a ranger:
 If people go beyond, 't is quite a crime,
 But not my fault—I tell them all in time.

PLATONIC ✧ The influential 15th century Italian philosopher and astrologer Marcilio Ficino borrowed this idea from the *Symposium* of the Greek philosopher Plato, where he proposes a kind of non-erotic love of virtue and character that in a semi-mystical way mirrors "perfect" love of the divine. Plato referred only to the love of men or boys since love for women was presumed, unavoidably, to be marred by erotic desire. Byron's point here and [below](#) is that the idea of such a love, shorn of desire, is easily enlisted in the cause of self-deception .



AUGUSTA LEIGH ♡ "I have never ceased nor can cease to feel for a moment that perfect & boundless attachment which bound & binds me to you — which renders me utterly incapable of real love for any other human being. . ." Byron to his half-sister, from Venice, May 1819; three years after he fled England forever. He loved her more sincerely than any other, but their "crime" preyed on his conscience.

LXXXI

Love, then, but love within its proper limits,
 Was Julia's innocent determination
 In young Don Juan's favour, and to him its
 Exertion might be useful on occasion;
 And, lighted at too pure a shrine to dim its
 Ethereal lustre, with what sweet persuasion
 He might be taught, by love and her together—
 I really don't know what, nor Julia either.

LXXXII

Fraught with this fine intention, and well fenced
 In mail of proof — her purity of soul —
 She, for the future of her strength convinced.
 And that her honour was a rock, or mole,
 Exceeding sagely from that hour dispensed
 With any kind of troublesome control;
 But whether Julia to the task was equal
 Is that which must be mention'd in the sequel.

MAIL OF PROOF ✧ That is, Julia's purity was—she thought—proven “chain mail armour” protecting her honour.

LXXXIII

Her plan she deem'd both innocent and feasible,
 And, surely, with a stripling of sixteen
 Not scandal's fangs could fix on much that's seizable,
 Or if they did so, satisfied to mean
 Nothing but what was good, her breast was peaceable—
 A quiet conscience makes one so serene!
 Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded
 That all the Apostles would have done as they did.

LXXXIV

And if in the mean time her husband died,
 But Heaven forbid that such a thought should cross
 Her brain, though in a dream! (and then she sigh'd)
 Never could she survive that common loss;
 But just suppose that moment should betide,
 I only say suppose it—*inter nos*.
 (This should be *entre nous*, for Julia thought
 In French, but then the rhyme would go for naught.)

INTER NOS, ENTRE NOUS ✧ Both expressions mean “between us”, the first in Latin the second in French. Byron loves to wink at his audience about the artifice of his verses; boasting, of course.

LXXXV

I only say suppose this supposition:

Juan being then grown up to man's estate
 Would fully suit a widow of condition,
 Even seven years hence it would not be too late;
 And in the interim (to pursue this vision)
 The mischief, after all, could not be great,
 For he would learn the rudiments of love,
 I mean the "seraph" way of those above.

LXXXVI

So much for Julia. Now we'll turn to Juan.
 Poor little fellow! he had no idea
 Of his own case, and never hit the true one;
 In feelings quick as Ovid's Miss Medea,
 He puzzled over what he found a new one,
 But not as yet imagined it could be
 Thing quite in course, and not at all alarming,
 Which, with a little patience, might grow charming.

LXXXVII

Silent and pensive, idle, restless, slow,
 His home deserted for the lonely wood,
 Tormented with a wound he could not know,
 His, like all deep grief, plunged in solitude:
 I'm fond myself of solitude or so,
 But then, I beg it may be understood,
 By solitude I mean a sultan's, not
 A hermit's, with a haram for a grot.

LXXXVIII



40'28"

"Oh Love! in such a wilderness as this,
 Where transport and security entwine,
 Here is the empire of thy perfect bliss,
 And here thou art a god indeed divine."
The bard I quote from does not sing amiss,
 With the exception of the second line,
 For that same twining "transport and security"
 Are twisted to a phrase of some obscurity.



OVID'S MISS MEDEA ✎ At the start of Book VII of *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Medea, the daughter of the King of Colchis (on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea) — possibly the bloodiest sorceress in mythic history — falls for the Greek hero Jason who has come to bargain for the Golden Fleece then in the King's possession. In Ovid's poem, Medea is puzzled by her own infatuation, blaming the gods for making her love a stranger so passionately and against her inclination. A woman of action, Medea helps Jason win the fleece — in part by helping him kill the sleepless dragon that guards it, as seen in Carle Van Loo's painting — and flees Colchis with him, killing her younger brother in the escape. When, years later, Jason tires of her she takes revenge on him by killing their children and goes on to more bloody adventures in Athens. In his letters, Byron compares the unstable Caroline Lamb to Medea.

THE BARD I QUOTE FROM ✧ ...was the Scots poet Thomas Campbell, from the first few lines of the third Canto of his 1809 poem *Gertrude of Wyoming*. Campbell's poem — a mawkish account of a bloody 1778 battle in the Wyoming Valley in Pennsylvania between the American patriot militia and the British army with their Iroquois allies — was widely praised at the time although Byron's mockery of his friend's twisted syntax is well-deserved. Byron met Campbell early in his career, shortly after the publication of *Childe Harold* had made him famous. He esteemed the Scotsman highly, proposing in the Dedication to *Don Juan* that his fame — like that of Samuel Rogers and Anacreon Moore and George Crabbe — would rival the fame of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey.

LXXXIX

The poet meant, no doubt, and thus appeals
 To the good sense and senses of mankind,
 The very thing which every body feels,
 As all have found on trial, or may find,
 That no one likes to be disturb'd at meals
 Or love.—I won't say more about "entwined"
 Or "transport," as we knew all that before,
 But beg'security' will bolt the door.

XC

Young Juan wander'd by the glassy brooks,
 Thinking unutterable things; he threw
 Himself at length within the leafy nooks
 Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;
 There poets find materials for their books,
 And every now and then we read them through,
 So that their plan and prosody are eligible,
 Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

XCI

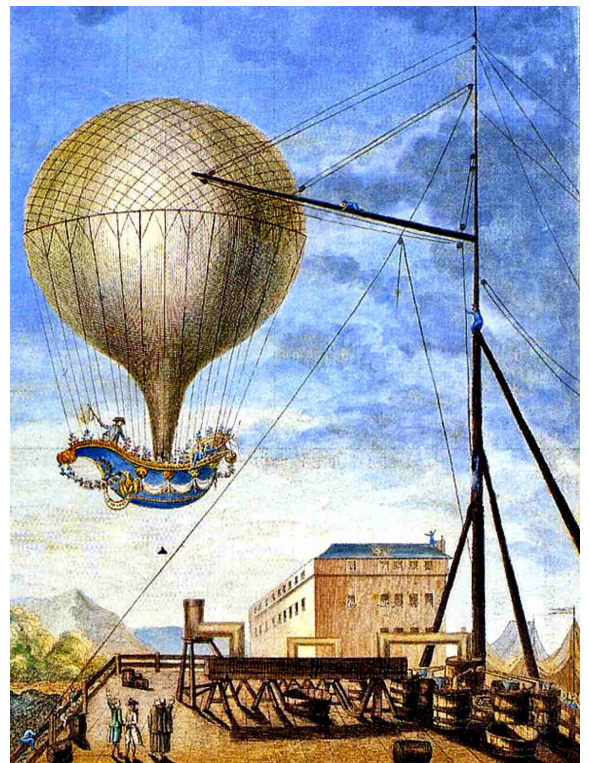
He, Juan (and not Wordsworth), so pursued
 His self-communion with his own high soul,
 Until his mighty heart, in its great mood,
 Had mitigated part, though not the whole
 Of its disease; he did the best he could
 With things not very subject to control,
 And turn'd, without perceiving his condition,
 Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.

XCII

He thought about himself, and the whole earth
 Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,
 And how the deuce they ever could have birth;
 And then he thought of earthquakes, and of wars,
 How many miles the moon might have in girth,
 Of air-balloons, and of the many bars
 To perfect knowledge of the boundless skies;—
 And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes.

UNINTELLIGIBLE WORDSWORTH ✧ Byron claimed to be baffled by Wordsworth's philosophical meanderings, mocked his banalities and deplored the *longeurs* of poems such as *The Excursion*. He thought Wordsworth failed to make the most of his own talents and, above all, he despised the Toryism and self-absorption of the *Laker* poets, including Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey.

HIGH SOUL ✧ Wordsworth's longer poems refer, obscurely, to his own or others' "high-soul" as if to some grandeur of spirit or perhaps to echoes of a mystical pantheism or monadism that Coleridge also tried to express in his *Eolian Harp*. Juan's self-absorbed, puerile daydreams at least resolve themselves into more concrete puzzles (next stanza).



AIR-BALLOONS ✧ The Montgolfier brothers' famous experiment with an unmanned balloon made of sackcloth held together by 1,800 buttons took place in June 1783. The poster shows a flight by two aviators at Nantes (France) one year later in a rom hydrogen balloon. By the end of the decade, ballooning was a continent-wide mania.

XCIII

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern
 Longings sublime, and aspirations high,
 Which some are born with, but the most part learn
 To plague themselves withal, they know not why:
 'T was strange that one so young should thus concern
 His brain about the action of the sky;
 If *you* think 't was philosophy that this did,
 I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

XCIV

He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,
 And heard a voice in all the winds; and then
 He thought of wood-nymphs and immortal bowers,
 And how the goddesses came down to men:
 He miss'd the pathway, he forgot the hours,
 And when he look'd upon his watch again,
 He found how much old Time had been a winner—
 He also found that he had lost his dinner.

XCV

Sometimes he turn'd to gaze upon his book,
 Boscan, or Garcilasso;—by the wind
 Even as the page is rustled while we look,
 So by the poesy of his own mind
 Over the mystic leaf his soul was shook,
 As if 't were one whereon magicians bind
 Their spells, and give them to the passing gale,
 According to some good old woman's tale.

XCVI

Thus would he while his lonely hours away
 Dissatisfied, nor knowing what he wanted;
 Nor glowing reverie, nor poet's lay,
 Could yield his spirit that for which it panted,
 A bosom whereon he his head might lay,
 And hear the heart beat with the love it granted,
 With—several other things, which I forget,
 Or which, at least, I need not mention yet.

PUBERTY ASSISTED ✧ A rather surprising psychological realism from one of the icons of romantic youth?

BOSCAN OR GARCILASSO ✧ Spanish poets of the 16th century; both wrote in a romantic Italian vein.

OTHER THINGS, WHICH I FORGET ✧ *Aposiopesis* or *breaking off* in midstream: a favorite trick of Byron's. Here, he coyly leaves room for the reader's imagination to supply the "other things" for which Juan's spirit "panted" (panting spirits!?). Then, again, two stanzas later (XCVIII) he is at it again, claiming to have forgotten his Commandments.

XCVII

Those lonely walks, and lengthening reveries,
 Could not escape the gentle Julia's eyes;
 She saw that Juan was not at his ease;
 But that which chiefly may, and must surprise,
 Is, that the Donna Inez did not tease
 Her only son with question or surmise:
 Whether it was she did not see, or would not,
 Or, like all very clever people, could not.

XCVIII

This may seem strange, but yet 't is very common;
 For instance—gentlemen, whose ladies take
 Leave to o'erstep the written rights of woman,
 And break the—Which commandment is 't they break?
 (I have forgot the number, and think no man
 Should rashly quote, for fear of a mistake.)
 I say, when these same gentlemen are jealous,
 They make some blunder, which their ladies tell us.

XCIX

A real husband always is suspicious,
 But still no less suspects in the wrong place,
 Jealous of some one who had no such wishes,
 Or pandering blindly to his own disgrace,
 By harbouring some dear friend extremely vicious;
 The last indeed's infallibly the case:
 And when the spouse and friend are gone off wholly,
 He wonders at their vice, and not his folly.

C

Thus parents also are at times short-sighted;
 Though watchful as the lynx, they ne'er discover,
 The while the wicked world beholds delighted,
Young Hopeful's mistress, or Miss Fanny's lover,
 Till some confounded escapade has blighted
 The plan of twenty years, and all is over;
 And then the mother cries, the father swears,
 And wonders why the devil he got heirs.


WRITTEN RIGHTS OF WOMAN ✧ “*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*” was a groundbreaking declaration of women's human rights— for example to an education — based on their moral equality with men, published in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft, the mother of Mary Shelley. These unexceptional ideas, formed against the background of the French revolution, had no sanction in the conservative society of Regency England.

To the extent that a married woman had any social or economic rights in early 19th century law they were entirely subordinate to the wishes of her husband. Still, as Byron's poem went to press, these prejudices were about to come under strong attack. In 1820, many women (and men) of the rising British bourgeoisie indignantly protested George IV's efforts to prevent his estranged wife Caroline from joining him on the throne by trying her in Parliament for adultery. The King's hypocrisy did much to strengthen support for the idea of rights for (married) women.

WHICH COMMANDMENT ✧ It is the seventh, forbidding adultery. Byron knew the Bible well from his earliest years, but scarcely had an adult romance that was *not* adulterous. His contemporary readers, knowing the deplorable morals of the fashionable classes during the Regency, no doubt assumed this. But none of the noble husbands he cuckolded were in any position — or mind — to charge him with it. This is another *convenient aposiopesis*

YOUNG HOPEFUL... MISS FANNY ✧ Stock characters from 18th century drama.

CI

 46'27"

But Inez was so anxious, and so clear
 Of sight, that I must think, on this occasion,
 She had some other motive much more near
 For leaving Juan to this new temptation;
 But what that motive was, I sha'n't say here;
 Perhaps to finish Juan's education,
 Perhaps to open Don Alfonso's eyes,
 In case he thought his wife too great a prize.

CII

It was upon a day, a summer's day;—
 Summer's indeed a very dangerous season,
 And so is spring about the end of May;
 The sun, no doubt, is the prevailing reason;
 But whatsoe'er the cause is, one may say,
 And stand convicted of more truth than treason,
 That there are months which nature grows more merry
 in,—
March has its hares, and May must have its heroine.

CIII

'T was on a summer's day—the sixth of June:—
 I like to be particular in dates,
 Not only of the age, and year, but moon;
 They are a sort of post-house, where the Fates
 Change horses, making history change its tune,
 Then spur away o'er empires and o'er states,
 Leaving at last not much besides chronology,
 Excepting the post-obits of theology.

CIV

'T was on the sixth of June, about the hour
 Of half-past six—perhaps still nearer seven—
 When Julia sate within as pretty a bower
 As e'er held houri in that heathenish heaven
 Described by Mahomet, and Anacreon Moore,
 To whom the lyre and laurels have been given,
 With all the trophies of triumphant song—
 He won them well, and may he wear them long!

MOTIVE ✦ **Another** insinuation that Donna Inez was a hypocrite; indulging a sexual intrigue with her own son as bait.

A SUMMER'S DAY ✦ This conventional opening line for a fable introduces a masterful sixteen-verse buildup to the first climax of the Canto, with comic hesitation, indirection, asides, declamations and reversals that resolves, finally on the last word of verse CXVIII.

A VERY DANGEROUS SEASON ✦ Before the Regency period, the London Season of balls, concerts, dances, parties and horse-racing had coincided with the winter session of the Parliament. But in the first decades of the 19th century, thanks to better roads and transportation between London and the countryside, there was no longer a need to settle in London before the winter snows made the roads impassible. Besides, after 1806, Parliament began its first sitting later; in January. The Royal family, too, was absent from London between November and April. So by the time of the Regency (after 1811), the fashionable classes stayed in the country until the best of the fox-hunting was over. They returned to London only after Easter, usually at the end of March. Then May, the end of spring, was a time for young women to "come out" into society — be presented at Court — and to claim their part as one of the Season's "heroines". The Season concluded on 12 August — the opening of the grouse-hunting season — when Parliament rose for a summer recess.

THE SUN ✦ Byron's **theory** that warmth breeds breeding.

MARCH...HARES ✦ March is the season when hares rut; a surge of sex hormones making them more active and erratic than usual.

PARTICULAR IN DATES ✦ Hah! The first event in **Don**✕**Juan** that gives us a certain date for the action occurs in Canto VII: the siege of Ismail.

POST-OBITS OF THEOLOGY ✦ A post-obit is a bond (debt) secured against the estate of the person after death. The post-obits of theology express the idea that the "gift" of life is in fact a debt owed to God who extracts an accounting after death; somewhat the lesson of the "parable of the talents" in e.g. Matthew 25:14-30

HOURI ✦ The refined, chaste and beautiful maids of Islamic legend who greet and serve the faithful (men, probably, but the Quran is not explicit) eternally in heaven. The implication is that they fulfil sexual desires as well. The word derives from a poetic Arabic expression for a woman with "eyes, black like a gazelle". Recall that Julia had **large dark eyes**.

ANACREON MOORE ✦ This is Thomas Moore (*q.v.*), whose first verse publication was a translation of one of Byron's favourite ancient lyricists, Anacreon. His once-popular work "*Lalla Rookh*" (1817), comprised prose and verse on an oriental theme; the marriage of a daughter of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Hobhouse thought Byron did not like the poem nearly as much as his praise of it suggested.

CV

She sate, but not alone; I know not well
 How this same interview had taken place,
 And even if I knew, I should not tell—
 People should hold their tongues in any case;
 No matter how or why the thing befell,
 But there were she and Juan, face to face—
 When two such faces are so, 't would be wise,
 But very difficult, to shut their eyes.

CVI

How beautiful she look'd! her conscious heart
 Glow'd in her cheek, and yet she felt no wrong.
 Oh Love! how perfect is thy mystic art,
 Strengthening the weak, and trampling on the strong,
 How self-deceitful is the sagest part
 Of mortals whom thy lure hath led along—
 The precipice she stood on was immense,
 So was her creed in her own innocence.

CVII

She thought of her own strength, and Juan's youth,
 And of the folly of all prudish fears,
 Victorious virtue, and domestic truth,
 And then of Don Alfonso's fifty years:
 I wish these last had not occur'd, in sooth,
 Because that number rarely much endears,
 And through all climes, the snowy and the sunny,
 Sounds ill in love, whate'er it may in money.

CVIII

When people say, "I've told you "fifty" times,"
 They mean to scold, and very often do;
 When poets say, "I've written "fifty" rhymes,"
 They make you dread that they'll recite them too;
 In gangs of "fifty", thieves commit their crimes;
 At "fifty" love for love is rare, 't is true,
 But then, no doubt, it equally as true is,
 A good deal may be bought for "fifty" Louis.

A GOOD DEAL ✧ If "deal" is read as meaning a part or portion of the whole then a possible referent is "love", two lines above. Thus: "a whole lot of lovin". But a deal is also a bargain — for "love" in this case. A *Louis* was a gold coin last issued by Louis XVI in 1792 bearing his likeness on the obverse, worth approximately £1, at the time.

CIX

Julia had honour, virtue, truth, and love,
 For Don Alfonso; and she inly swore,
 By all the vows below to powers above,
 She never would disgrace the ring she wore,
 Nor leave a wish which wisdom might reprove;
 And while she ponder'd this, besides much more,
 One hand on Juan's carelessly was thrown,
 Quite by mistake—she thought it was her own;

CX

Unconsciously she lean'd upon the other,
 Which play'd within the tangles of her hair:
 And to contend with thoughts she could not smother
 She seem'd by the distraction of her air.
 'T was surely very wrong in Juan's mother
 To leave together this imprudent pair,
 She who for many years had watch'd her son so—
 I'm very certain "mine" would not have done so.

CXI

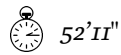
The hand which still held Juan's, by degrees
 Gently, but palpably confirm'd its grasp,
 As if it said, "Detain me, if you please;"
 Yet there's no doubt she only meant to clasp
 His fingers with a pure Platonic squeeze:
 She would have shrunk as from a toad, or asp,
 Had she imagined such a thing could rouse
 A feeling dangerous to a prudent spouse.

CXII

I cannot know what Juan thought of this,
 But what he did, is much what you would do;
 His young lip thank'd it with a grateful kiss,
 And then, abash'd at its own joy, withdrew
 In deep despair, lest he had done amiss,—
 Love is so very timid when 't is new:
 She blush'd, and frown'd not, but she strove to speak,
 And held her tongue, her voice was grown so weak.

I CANNOT KNOW ✧ Of course Byron *could know* what Juan thinks; but he's not interested. Juan has little or no interior life. Still, B. *is interested* in reminding the reader that Juan behaves just as anyone would.

CXIII



The sun set, and up rose the yellow moon:
 The devil's in the moon for mischief; they
 Who call'd her CHASTE, methinks, began too soon
 Their nomenclature; there is not a day,
 The longest, not the twenty-first of June,
 Sees half the business in a wicked way
 On which three single hours of moonshine smile—
 And then she looks so modest all the while.

CHASTE ✧ Conventional. The *Casta Diva* ("Chaste Goddess") of Bellini's opera *Norma* is the moon. The Romans venerated Diana, the virgin goddess of the hunt, as goddess of the moon.

TWENTY-FIRST OF JUNE ✧ Midsummer night; Shakespeare's play, too, bathed by the light of the moon whose influence ties the four stories of the Night together.

CXIV

There is a dangerous silence in that hour,
 A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
 To open all itself, without the power
 Of calling wholly back its self-control;
 The silver light which, hallowing tree and tower,
 Sheds beauty and deep softness o'er the whole,
 Breathes also to the heart, and o'er it throws
 A loving languor, which is not repose.

CXV

And Julia sate with Juan, half embraced
 And half retiring from the glowing arm,
 Which trembled like the bosom where 't was placed;
 Yet still she must have thought there was no harm,
 Or else 't were easy to withdraw her waist;
 But then the situation had its charm,
 And then—— God knows what next—I can't go on;
 I'm almost sorry that I e'er begun.

CXVI

Oh Plato! Plato! you have paved the way,
 With your confounded fantasies, to more
 Immoral conduct by the fancied sway
 Your system feigns o'er the controulless core
 Of human hearts, than all the long array
 Of poets and romancers:—You're a bore,
 A charlatan, a coxcomb—and have been,
 At best, no better than a go-between.

PLATO! ✧ The philosopher was not really responsible for the nonsense about "platonic" love promulgated in his name and certainly did not propose a "system". But the outburst allows Byron to impose a further dramatic delay in the climax of the scene.

A GO-BETWEEN ✧ A panderer, pimp

CXVII

And Julia's voice was lost, except in sighs,
 Until too late for useful conversation;
 The tears were gushing from her gentle eyes,
 I wish indeed they had not had occasion,
 But who, alas! can love, and then be wise?
 Not that remorse did not oppose temptation;
 A little still she strove, and much repented
 And whispering "I will ne'er consent"—consented.

CXVIII

'T is said that Xerxes offer'd a reward
 To those who could invent him a new pleasure:
 Methinks the requisition's rather hard,
 And must have cost his majesty a treasure:
 For my part, I'm a moderate-minded bard,
 Fond of a little love (which I call leisure);
 I care not for new pleasures, as the old
 Are quite enough for me, so they but hold.

CXIX

Oh Pleasure! you are indeed a pleasant thing,
 Although one must be damn'd for you, no doubt:
 I make a resolution every spring
 Of reformation, ere the year run out,
 But somehow, this my vestal vow takes wing,
 Yet still, I trust it may be kept throughout:
 I'm very sorry, very much ashamed,
 And mean, next winter, to be quite reclaim'd.

CXX

Here my chaste Muse a liberty must take—
 Start not! still chaster reader—she'll be nice hence—
 Forward, and there is no great cause to quake;
 This liberty is a poetic licence,
 Which some irregularity may make
 In the design, and as I have a high sense
 Of Aristotle and the Rules, 't is fit
 To beg his pardon when I err a bit.

XERXES ✧ And now for something completely different. . . a *non-sequitur* to relieve the tension and to signal a change of scene. Xerxes was the great Persian king of first third of the 5th century BCE whom the Spartans resisted at Thermopylae and whom the Athenians defeated in the naval battle of Salamis and again at the battle of Plataea. This makes him, as Byron scholar Peter Cochran says, a "prominent member of Byron's historical bestiary." Romans of the Republic (e.g. Cicero) re-told this fable about Xerxes to illustrate what they considered the essential flakiness of Eastern ways.

VESTAL VOW ✧ The Roman priestesses who maintained the eternal flame of the Temple of Vesta — the supposed source of every household hearth — took a vow of chastity for the three decades of their service.

ARISTOTLE AND THE RULES ✧ In the *Poetics*, Aristotle, the father of both physical science and the dramatic arts, laid down rules of composition for epic poetry and described the "unities" of action, time and place that should govern drama. The unities were intended to enhance the credibility of a narrative by ensuring that the events comprising the drama could, imaginatively, have taken place in the time-frame and location of the depiction (called "continuity" in film dramas). Needless to say, Byron's claimed respect for the Aristotelian rules in *Don Juan* is humbug. He ignores the rules of Epic composition — especially the stricture forbidding the poet to speak in his own voice — and, although he pretends to "err" in his respect for the unities by leaping-over several months, his change of scene is perfectly in line with Aristotle's rules.

CXXI

This licence is to hope the reader will
 Suppose from June the sixth (the fatal day,
 Without whose epoch my poetic skill
 For want of facts would all be thrown away),
 But keeping Julia and Don Juan still
 In sight, that several months have pass'd; we'll say
 'T was in November⁵⁴⁴, but I'm not so sure
 About the day—the era's more obscure.

NOT SO SURE ABOUT THE DAY ✧ Yet later Byron will tell assure us that the events he is about to describe caused a scandal on the day after and were written up in “the English newspapers”

CXXII

We'll talk of that anon.—'T is sweet to hear
 At midnight on the blue and moonlit deep
 The song and oar of Adria's gondolier,
 By distance mellow'd, o'er the waters sweep;
 'T is sweet to see the evening star appear;
 'T is sweet to listen as the night-winds creep
 From leaf to leaf; 't is sweet to view on high
 The rainbow, based on ocean, span the sky.

T'IS SWEET TO HEAR... ✧ Byron introduces the climactic scenes of the farce with a bravura performance: a sustained seven-verse *anaphora* — the rhetorical device of repetition (“*tis sweet. . . 'tis sweeter*”) at the start of each verse — that builds to a climax as the experiences become more specific and personal. In less expert hands it could be a dull drum, or merely artifice, but Byron undercuts the tone with bathos for comic effect and varies the repetition (“*Dear is. . .*” in verse 126) when he wants to be more serious. Then, having reached the local climax, marked by yet another rhetorical device, *isocolon* (“*But sweeter still than this, than these, than all. . .*”), he turns and spins away on a second digression that delays the re-entry of the lovers for a further half dozen stanzas.

CXXIII

'T is sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark
 Bay deep-mouth'd welcome as we draw near home;
 'T is sweet to know there is an eye will mark
 Our coming, and look brighter when we come;
 'T is sweet to be awaken'd by the lark,
 Or lull'd by falling waters; sweet the hum
 Of bees, the voice of girls, the song of birds,
 The lisp of children, and their earliest words.

ADRIA'S GONDOLIER ✧ Venice is exposed to the Adriatic sea.


CXXIV

Sweet is the vintage, when the showering grapes
 In Bacchanal profusion reel to earth,
 Purple and gushing: sweet are our escapes
 From civic revelry to rural mirth;
 Sweet to the miser are his glittering heaps,
 Sweet to the father is his first-born's birth,
 Sweet is revenge—especially to women,
 Pillage to soldiers, prize-money to seamen.

CXXV

Sweet is a legacy, and passing sweet
 The unexpected death of some old lady
 Or gentleman of seventy years complete,
 Who've made "us youth" wait too—too long already
 For an estate, or cash, or country seat,
 Still breaking, but with stamina so steady
 That all the Israelites are fit to mob its
 Next owner for their double-damn'd post-obits.

CXXVI

 58'10"

'T is sweet to win, no matter how, one's laurels,
 By blood or ink; 't is sweet to put an end
 To strife; 't is sometimes sweet to have our quarrels,
 Particularly with a tiresome friend:
 Sweet is old wine in bottles, ale in barrels;
 Dear is the helpless creature we defend
 Against the world; and dear the schoolboy spot
 We ne'er forget, though there we are forgot.

CXXVII

But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,
 Is first and passionate love—it stands alone,
 Like Adam's recollection of his fall;
 The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd—all's known—
 And life yields nothing further to recall
 Worthy of this ambrosial sin, so shown,
 No doubt in fable, as the unforgiven
 Fire which Prometheus filch'd for us from heaven.

CXXVIII

Man's a strange animal, and makes strange use
 Of his own nature, and the various arts,
 And likes particularly to produce
 Some new experiment to show his parts;
 This is the age of oddities let loose,
 Where different talents find their different marts;
 You'd best begin with truth, and when you've lost your
 Labour, there's a sure market for imposture.

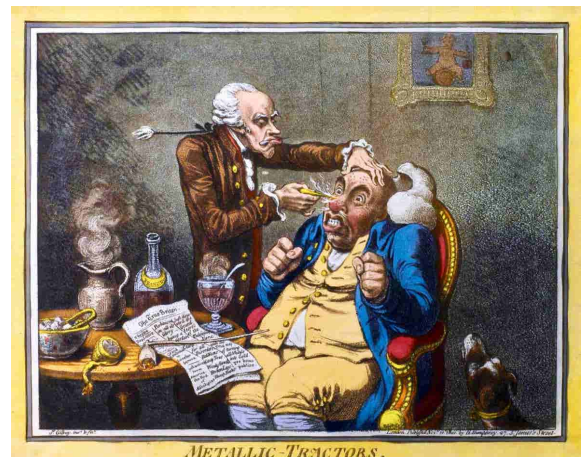
SOME OLD LADY ✧ Perhaps Byron was thinking of Lady Judith Milbanke (née Noel), Annabella's mother, whose estate would be divided between himself and Annabella after her death, according to the deed of separation between them. Lady Noel did not like Byron, nor he her. But he grieved for his estranged wife when her mother died in January 1822. As required by the Lady Millbanke's will, Byron assumed the arms of the Noel family and thereafter signed himself as "Noel Byron"; usually by the initials "NB"

US YOUTH ✧ This is the rallying cry of the elderly, fat Falstaff in Henry IV Part One to justify his juvenile (and worse) behavior.

ISRAELITES ✧ Like many others of his class, Byron described the money lenders who fed his excesses at Cambridge and in London at high rates of interest and who had the bailiffs sell-up his furniture and library in his last months in London as "Jews". It was intended as racial abuse, even when it was accurate in an ethnic sense.

THE UNFORGIVEN FIRE ✧ Prometheus, the Titan who stole fire from the Gods and gave it to man, was never forgiven but condemned to eternal torment. Byron compares "first and passionate love" both to Promethean fire and to Adam's knowledge of good and evil. Each transforms the "sinner" forever.

A STRANGE ANIMAL ✧ Byron emerges from one set of rhetorical asides ("Tis sweet...") only to launch into another digression: a satire on the idea of progress. The connection between the two is the ambiguous fruit of the tree of knowledge ("good and evil") that comprises both carnal and scientific knowledge: "*ambrosial sin*" and Promethean fire. His encyclopædic interests allow Byron to catalog the contrariness of technology that alternately saves and kills in his contemporary "age of oddities let loose" where 'imposture' is more profitable than truth. Man's nature, as revealed by these "wondrous new machines" is perplexing to himself ("pleasure's a sin and sin's a pleasure"). Still he is forced to work out his own destiny by trial and error. Should he arrive at an answer ("The goal gain'd..."), however, it will probably come too late.



NEW NOSES ✎ Gilray's cartoon shows a surgeon purporting to "cure" *roseacea* or "drinker's nose" with a probe, known as "Perkins' tractors" after the United States quack Dr. Elisha Perkins, who patented them in 1796. They comprised two pointed rods about 10 cm long, made from different kinds of metal. By pulling them across the affected part, the disease was supposed to be yanked out. President George Washington was one of Perkins' many hundreds of customers.

CXXIX

What opposite discoveries we have seen!
 (Signs of true genius, and of empty pockets.)
 One makes new noses, one a guillotine,
 One breaks your bones, one sets them in their sockets;
 But vaccination certainly has been
 A kind antithesis to Congreve's rockets,
 With which the Doctor paid off an old pox,
 By borrowing a new one from an ox.

CXXX

Bread has been made (indifferent) from potatoes;
 And galvanism has set some corpses grinning,
 But has not answer'd like the apparatus
 Of the Humane Society's beginning
 By which men are unsuffocated gratis:
 What wondrous new machines have late been spinning!
 I said the small-pox has gone out of late;
 Perhaps it may be follow'd by the great.

CXXXI

'T is said the great came from America;
 Perhaps it may set out on its return,—
 The population there so spreads, they say
 'T is grown high time to thin it in its turn,
 With war, or plague, or famine, any way,
 So that civilisation they may learn;
 And which in ravage the more loathsome evil is—
 Their real "lues", or our pseudo-syphilis?

GUILLOTINE ✧ Joseph Guillotin proposed this new machine for execution as a humane alternative to the executioners' axe in 1789, just in time for the French revolutions' bloody excesses of 1793-4.

CONGREVE'S ROCKETS ✧ Sir William Congreve introduced the use of rocket artillery, long used in China, during the British war of 1812 against the rebellious U.S. colonies. The rockets' bright "red glare" — spectacular if not terribly effective — is remembered in Francis Scott Key's ode to the *Star-Spangled Banner* flying above Fort McHenry under British bombardment.



PAID OFF AN OLD POX ✧ In 1796, the English physician Edward Jenner introduced the practice of injecting pus from the blisters caused by the mild disease *vaccinia* or "cowpox", to protect (or *vaccinate*) individuals against the more serious, related, disease of smallpox. Its potential to save millions made vaccination a "kind antithesis" to military massacre but Gilray joked it meant to "have a cow".

GALVANISM ✧ Luigi Galvani, the Italian anatomist, created a sensation in the with his 1780 discovery that electric shocks caused a dead frog's leg muscle tissue to contract. The experiment seemed to contemporary observers to imply that electricity was somehow a "life principle". That idea animates Mary Shelley's novel "Frankenstein" whose origins were said to be a night that she, Shelley, Byron and his "physician" Polidori had spent composing ghost stories at the Villa Diodati, on the banks of Lake Geneva, in 1816.



UNSUFFOCATED GRATIS ✧ London's Society for the Recovery of Persons Apparently Drowned, formed in 1774, held that drowning victims could be resuscitated by blowing tobacco smoke into their rectum. It installed a number of these billowed-enema kits along the Thames for that purpose.

☞ This is the patent-age...

CXXXII

This is the patent-age of new inventions
 For killing bodies, and for saving souls,
 All propagated with the best intentions;
 Sir Humphry Davy's lantern, by which coals
 Are safely mined for in the mode he mentions,
 Tombuctoo travels, voyages to the Poles,
 Are ways to benefit mankind, as true,
 Perhaps, as shooting them at Waterloo.

CXXXIII

Man's a phenomenon, one knows not what,
 And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure;
 'T is pity though, in this sublime world, that
 Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure;
 Few mortals know what end they would be at,
 But whether glory, power, or love, or treasure,
 The path is through perplexing ways, and when
 The goal is gain'd, we die, you know—and then—

CXXXIV

What then?—I do not know, no more do you—
 And so good night.—Return we to our story:
 'T was in November, when fine days are few,
 And the far mountains wax a little hoary,
 And clap a white cape on their mantles blue;
 And the sea dashes round the promontory,
 And the loud breaker boils against the rock,
 And sober suns must set at five o'clock.

CXXXV

'T was, as the watchmen say, a cloudy night;
 No moon, no stars, the wind was low or loud
 By gusts, and many a sparkling hearth was bright
 With the piled wood, round which the family crowd;
 There's something cheerful in that sort of light,
 Even as a summer sky's without a cloud:
 I'm fond of fire, and crickets, and all that,
 A lobster-sallad, and champagne, and chat.

THE GREAT ✧ The Great Pox is syphilis that remained incurable until the advent of modern antibiotics in the mid-20th century; long after vaccination had slowed the spread of small-pox.

CAME FROM AMERICA ✧ There has been a debate about the “foreign” origins of syphilis since the first epidemic outbreak in Naples in 1495 among the armies of the invading French. There is evidence the disease existed in the New World but whether the spirochete *treponema pallidum* — which is also the vector of the tropical disease yaws — previously existed in Europe or whether the crew of Columbus' expedition three years earlier had transmitted the curse remains contentious among biologists.

WAR, OR PLAGUE, OR FAMINE ✧ “Did you ever read *Malthus on Population*? If he be right, war and pestilence are our best friends, to save us from being eaten alive in this 'best of all possible worlds'.” Byron to Hodgson, Sept. 1811

LUES ✧ Latin for “the plague”; siphilis was sometimes called the *lues venerea*. Pseudo-syphilis is small-pox. Byron contracted gonorrhoea in Venice in 1817 after strenuous efforts at the *Carnivale*.

HUMPHRY DAVY'S LANTERN ✧ Sir Humphrey and Lady Jane Davy were friends of Byron's in London — he first met Mme de Staëll at a dinner at Lady Davy's house in Grosvenor Square — and later visited him in Italy. Davy was an autodidact in the best tradition of 18th century science; an early lecturer on galvanism; the discoverer of several metallic elements; an experimenter with Priestly's nitrous oxide gas (he introduced Southey and Coleridge to its recreational use); the first Secretary of the Royal Society, and; the patron of Michael Faraday. His miners' lamp (1815) enclosed the flame in a wire gauze that radiated and dispersed the heat of the flame. This moderated the danger of igniting the explosive methane gas that lurked in coal mines.

TOMBUCTOO TRAVELS ✧ The Malian capital of Tombouctou, on the river Niger, was an ancient hub of caravan routes across the Sahara and a capital of the Songhai empire. In the 15th and 16th centuries it was a wealthy, cosmopolitan centre of trade and learning. Then, after a period of political and economic decline it succumbed to Moroccan invasion in 1590. European explorers early in the 19th century began to re-discover the Saharan region but the Scots explorer A. G. Laing did not reach Tombouctou until 1826 — eight years after Byron wrote these lines — where Arab traders killed him.

A LOBSTER-SALLAD, AND CHAMPAGNE ✧ Murray's printers first introduced the error of placing a comma between “lobster” and “sallad”. It is clear from several mentions in his letters — and from his proof corrections — that Byron meant a favourite collation at any ball; the lobster-salad.

CXXXVI

'T was midnight—Donna Julia was in bed,
 Sleeping, most probably,—when at her door
 Arose a clatter might awake the dead,
 If they had never been awoke before,
 And that they have been so we all have read,
 And are to be so, at the least, once more;—
 The door was fasten'd, but with voice and fist
 First knocks were heard, then “Madam—Madam—hist!—

ONCE MORE ✧ Presumably a reference to the Christian (and Islamic) tradition of a general resurrection of the dead on the “Day of Judgement”.

CXXXVII

“For God’s sake, Madam—Madam—here’s my master,
 With more than half the city at his back—
 Was ever heard of such a curst disaster!
 'T is not my fault—I kept good watch—Alack!
 Do pray undo the bolt a little faster—
 They’re on the stair just now, and in a crack
 Will all be here; perhaps he yet may fly—
 Surely the window’s not so “very” high!”

CXXXVIII

By this time Don Alfonso was arrived,
 With torches, friends, and servants in great number;
 The major part of them had long been wived,
 And therefore paused not to disturb the slumber
 Of any wicked woman, who contrived
 By stealth her husband’s temples to encumber:
 Examples of this kind are so contagious,
 Were “one” not punish’d, “all” would be outrageous.


TEMPLES TO ENCUMBER ✧ With a cuckold’s horns. The horns are those of a stag whose female mates are forfeit to any other male that defeats him in battle.

CXXXIX

I can’t tell how, or why, or what suspicion
 Could enter into Don Alfonso’s head;
 But for a cavalier of his condition
 It surely was exceedingly ill-bred,
 Without a word of previous admonition,
 To hold a levee round his lady’s bed,
 And summon lackeys, arm’d with fire and sword,
 To prove himself the thing he most abhorr’d.

A LEVEE ✧ The ceremony at a monarch’s awakening.

CXL

 64'42"

Poor Donna Julia, starting as from sleep
 (Mind—that I do not say—she had not slept),
 Began at once to scream, and yawn, and weep;
 Her maid Antonia, who was an adept,
 Contrived to fling the bed-clothes in a heap,
 As if she had just now from out them crept:
 I can't tell why she should take all this trouble
 To prove her mistress had been sleeping double.

CXLI

But Julia mistress, and Antonia maid,
 Appear'd like two poor harmless women, who
 Of goblins, but still more of men afraid,
 Had thought one man might be deterr'd by two,
 And therefore side by side were gently laid,
 Until the hours of absence should run through,
 And truant husband should return, and say,
 "My dear, I was the first who came away."

CXLII

Now Julia found at length a voice, and cried,
 "In heaven's name, Don Alfonso, what d' ye mean?
 Has madness seized you? would that I had died
 Ere such a monster's victim I had been!
 What may this midnight violence betide,
 A sudden fit of drunkenness or spleen?
 Dare you suspect me, whom the thought would kill?
 Search, then, the room!"—Alfonso said, "I will."

CXLIII

"He" search'd, "they" search'd, and rummaged everywhere,
 Closet and clothes' press, chest and window-seat,
 And found much linen, lace, and several pair
 Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete,
 With other articles of ladies fair,
 To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat:
 Arras they prick'd and curtains with their swords,
 And wounded several shutters, and some boards.

CXLIV

NO MATTER WHAT ✧ The chamber pot.

Under the bed they search'd, and there they found—
 No matter what—it was not that they sought;
 They open'd windows, gazing if the ground
 Had signs or footmarks, but the earth said nought;
 And then they stared each other's faces round:
 'T is odd, not one of all these seekers thought,
 And seems to me almost a sort of blunder,
 Of looking in the bed as well as under.

CXLV

During this inquisition, Julia's tongue
 Was not asleep—"Yes, search and search," she cried,
 "Insult on insult heap, and wrong on wrong!
 It was for this that I became a bride!
 For this in silence I have suffer'd long
 A husband like Alfonso at my side;
 But now I'll bear no more, nor here remain,
 If there be law or lawyers in all Spain.

CXLVI

"Yes, Don Alfonso! husband now no more,
 If ever you indeed deserved the name,
 Is 't worthy of your years?—you have threescore—
 Fifty, or sixty, it is all the same—
 Is 't wise or fitting, causeless to explore
 For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?
 Ungrateful, perjured, barbarous Don Alfonso,
 How dare you think your lady would go on so?

CXLVII

"Is it for this I have disdain'd to hold
 The common privileges of my sex?
 That I have chosen a confessor so old
 And deaf, that any other it would vex,
 And never once he has had cause to scold,
 But found my very innocence perplex
 So much, he always doubted I was married—
 How sorry you will be when I've miscarried!

CXLVIII

“Was it for this that no Cortejo e’er
 I yet have chosen from out the youth of Seville?
 Is it for this I scarce went anywhere,
 Except to bull-fights, mass, play, rout, and revel?
 Is it for this, whate’er my suitors were,
 I favor’d none—nay, was almost uncivil?
 Is it for this that General Count O’Reilly,
 Who took Algiers, declares I used him vilely?”


CXLIX

“Did not the Italian “Musico” Cazzani
 Sing at my heart six months at least in vain?
 Did not his countryman, Count Corniani,
 Call me the only virtuous wife in Spain?
 Were there not also Russians, English, many?
 The Count Strongstroganoff I put in pain,
 And Lord Mount Coffeehouse, the Irish peer,
 Who kill’d himself for love (with wine) last year.

CL

“Have I not had two bishops at my feet,
 The Duke of Ichar, and Don Fernan Nunez?
 And is it thus a faithful wife you treat?
 I wonder in what quarter now the moon is:
 I praise your vast forbearance not to beat
 Me also, since the time so opportune is—
 Oh, valiant man! with sword drawn and cock’d trigger,
 Now, tell me, don’t you cut a pretty figure?”

CLI

 69’37"

“Was it for this you took your sudden journey.
 Under pretence of business indispensable
 With that sublime of rascals your attorney,
 Whom I see standing there, and looking sensible
 Of having play’d the fool? though both I spurn, he
 Deserves the worst, his conduct’s less defensible,
 Because, no doubt, ’t was for his dirty fee,
 And not from any love to you nor me.

CORTEJO ✧ Literally, a suitor. The socially accepted lover of a married woman in a society where marriage could be contracted for alliance, money or respectability and love might be sought elsewhere. The Spanish equivalent of the Italian *Cavalier Servente*; a position Byron found himself occupying two years later in his affair with Theresa Guiccioli.

GENERAL COUNT O’REILLY ✧ Alexander O’Reilly, an Irishman, was a lieutenant general in the army of Spain. But Julia slips up, here. O’Reilly’s siege of Algiers in 1775 failed although 4,000 of his men died in the attempt.

CAZZANI AND CORNIANI ✧ All the names in this verse and the next are fictitious. The first two are Italian inuendis. Cazzani means “little prick” and Corniani, “cuckold”

LORD MOUNT COFFEEHOUSE ✧ The 1801 Act of Union created many new Irish peers — Castlereagh among them — who were abhorred both by the Irish and by English conservatives. “The Mount” coffee house in Mount St, Mayfair, was owned by John Westbrook, father of Shelley’s first wife, Harriet.

THE MOON ✧ Julia implies that Alfonso is crazed by the influence of the moon: a “lunatic”.

THAT SUBLIME OF RASCALS ✧ Byron, like Dr Johnson, had little good to say of attorneys, with more reason. A “sublime” is an epitome — an ultimate refinement (a nadir, in this case) — that implies, too, haughtiness and superiority or, perhaps, only “raised up”.

CLII

"If he comes here to take a deposition,
By all means let the gentleman proceed;
You've made the apartment in a fit condition:
There's pen and ink for you, sir, when you need—
Let every thing be noted with precision,
I would not you for nothing should be fee'd—
But, as my maid's undrest, pray turn your spies out."
"Oh!" sobb'd Antonia, "I could tear their eyes out."

CLIII

"There is the closet, there the toilet, there
The antechamber—search them under, over;
There is the sofa, there the great arm-chair,
The chimney—which would really hold a lover.
I wish to sleep, and beg you will take care
And make no further noise, till you discover
The secret cavern of this lurking treasure—
And when 't is found, let me, too, have that pleasure.

CLIV

"And now, Hidalgo! now that you have thrown
Doubt upon me, confusion over all,
Pray have the courtesy to make it known
"Who" is the man you search for? how d' ye call
Him? what's his lineage? let him but be shown—
I hope he's young and handsome—is he tall?
Tell me—and be assured, that since you stain
My honour thus, it shall not be in vain.

HIDALGO ✧ A Spaniard of unalloyed blood. [See the earlier description of Don José](#)

CLV

"At least, perhaps, he has not sixty years,
At that age he would be too old for slaughter,
Or for so young a husband's jealous fears
(Antonia! let me have a glass of water).
I am ashamed of having shed these tears,
They are unworthy of my father's daughter;
My mother dream'd not in my natal hour
That I should fall into a monster's power.

CLVI

“Perhaps ’t is of Antonia you are jealous,
 You saw that she was sleeping by my side
 When you broke in upon us with your fellows:
 Look where you please—we’ve nothing, sir, to hide;
 Only another time, I trust, you’ll tell us,
 Or for the sake of decency abide
 A moment at the door, that we may be
 Drest to receive so much good company.

CLVII

“And now, sir, I have done, and say no more;
 The little I have said may serve to show
 The guileless heart in silence may grieve o’er
 The wrongs to whose exposure it is slow:
 I leave you to your conscience as before,
 ’T will one day ask you “why” you used me so?
 God grant you feel not then the bitterest grief!—
 Antonia! where’s my pocket-handkerchief?”

CLVIII

She ceased, and turn’d upon her pillow; pale
 She lay, her dark eyes flashing through their tears,
 Like skies that rain and lighten; as a veil,
 Waved and o’ershading her wan cheek, appears
 Her streaming hair; the black curls strive, but fail,
 To hide the glossy shoulder, which uprears
 Its snow through all;—her soft lips lie apart,
 And louder than her breathing beats her heart.

CLIX

The Senhor Don Alfonso stood confused;
 Antonia bustled round the ransack’d room,
 And, turning up her nose, with looks abused
 Her master and his myrmidons, of whom
 Not one, except the attorney, was amused;
 He, like Achates, faithful to the tomb,
 So there were quarrels, cared not for the cause,
 Knowing they must be settled by the laws.

SHE CEASED... ✧ A verse of “elevated” poetic diction and classical tropes makes a perfect comic complement to Julia’s theatrical speech of hypocritical outrage.

MYRMIDONS ✧ The bodyguards of Achilles in the *Illiad*.

ACHATES ✧ Aeneas’s faithful companion in Virgil’s epic poem. A second reminder that *Don*✕*Juan*, too, is an epic.

CLX

With prying snub-nose, and small eyes, he stood,
 Following Antonia's motions here and there,
 With much suspicion in his attitude;
 For reputations he had little care;
 So that a suit or action were made good,
 Small pity had he for the young and fair,
 And ne'er believed in negatives, till these
 Were proved by competent false witnesses.

CLXI

But Don Alfonso stood with downcast looks,
 And, truth to say, he made a foolish figure;
 When, after searching in five hundred nooks,
 And treating a young wife with so much rigour,
 He gain'd no point, except some self-rebukes,
 Added to those his lady with such vigour
 Had pour'd upon him for the last half-hour,
 Quick, thick, and heavy—as a thunder-shower.

CLXII


At first he tried to hammer an excuse,
 To which the sole reply was tears and sobs,
 And indications of hysterics, whose
 Prologue is always certain throes, and throbs,
 Gasps, and whatever else the owners choose:
 Alfonso saw his wife, and thought of Job's;
 He saw too, in perspective, her relations,
 And then he tried to muster all his patience.

CLXIII

He stood in act to speak, or rather stammer,
 But sage Antonia cut him short before
 The anvil of his speech received the hammer,
 With "Pray, sir, leave the room, and say no more,
 Or madam dies."—Alfonso mutter'd, "D—n her,"
 But nothing else, the time of words was o'er;
 He cast a rueful look or two, and did,
 He knew not wherefore, that which he was bid.

JOB'S WIFE ✧ She advised the biblical Patriarch, tested by God with misfortune and disease, to "Curse God and die". Her character is that of a spiteful wife who torments rather than consoles. Perhaps Alfonso is also measuring his own patience against the stoicism of Job.

CLXIV

 75'31"

With him retired his "*posse comitatus*,"
 The attorney last, who linger'd near the door
 Reluctantly, still tarrying there as late as
 Antonia let him—not a little sore
 At this most strange and unexplain'd "hiatus"
 In Don Alfonso's facts, which just now wore
 An awkward look; as he revolved the case,
 The door was fasten'd in his legal face.

CLXV

No sooner was it bolted, than—Oh shame!
 Oh sin! Oh sorrow! and oh womankind!
 How can you do such things and keep your fame,
 Unless this world, and t' other too, be blind?
 Nothing so dear as an unfilch'd good name!
 But to proceed—for there is more behind:
 With much heartfelt reluctance be it said,
 Young Juan slipp'd half-smother'd, from the bed.

CLXVI

He had been hid—I don't pretend to say
 How, nor can I indeed describe the where—
 Young, slender, and pack'd easily, he lay,
 No doubt, in little compass, round or square;
 But pity him I neither must nor may
 His suffocation by that pretty pair;
 'T were better, sure, to die so, than be shut
 With maudlin Clarence in his Malmsey butt.

CLXVII

And, secondly, I pity not, because
 He had no business to commit a sin,
 Forbid by heavenly, fined by human laws,
 At least 't was rather early to begin;
 But at sixteen the conscience rarely gnaws
 So much as when we call our old debts in
 At sixty years, and draw the accompts of evil,
 And find a deuced balance with the devil.

POSSE COMITATUS ✧ The "power of the county", that is, an armed force raised by the sheriff to enforce the law.

AN UNFILCH'D GOOD NAME ✧ Iago in *Othello* (III, iii 155): "...He that filches from me my good name / Robs me of that which not enriches him / And makes me poor indeed"

TO DIE SO ✧ To "die" was a common poetic euphemism for detumescence in the 16th and 17th centuries. The OED cites Shakespeare and Donne but also John Denver's *Annie's Song* ("You fill up my senses"). Byron repeats the innuendo two verses later at verse 168 (in case we missed it?).

MAUDLIN CLARENCE ✧ In Shakespeare's *Richard III* (I, iv) the Duke of Clarence is drowned in a butt of wine after having been stabbed. Malmsey was a sweet wine, like a sherry.

FINED BY HUMAN LAWS ✧ See [mulct](#)

CLXVIII

Of his position I can give no notion:

'T is written in the Hebrew Chronicle,
How the physicians, leaving pill and potion,
Prescribed, by way of blister, a young belle,
When old King David's blood grew dull in motion,
And that the medicine answer'd very well;
Perhaps 't was in a different way applied,
For David lived, but Juan nearly died.

CLXIX

What's to be done? Alfonso will be back
The moment he has sent his fools away.
Antonia's skill was put upon the rack,
But no device could be brought into play—
And how to parry the renew'd attack?
Besides, it wanted but few hours of day:
Antonia puzzled; Julia did not speak,
But press'd her bloodless lip to Juan's cheek.

CLXX

He turn'd his lip to hers, and with his hand
Call'd back the tangles of her wandering hair;
Even then their love they could not all command,
And half forgot their danger and despair:
Antonia's patience now was at a stand—
"Come, come, 't is no time now for fooling there,"
She whisper'd, in great wrath—"I must deposit
This pretty gentleman within the closet:

CLXXI

"Pray, keep your nonsense for some luckier night—
"Who" can have put my master in this mood?
What will become on 't—I'm in such a fright,
The devil's in the urchin, and no good—
Is this a time for giggling? this a plight?
Why, don't you know that it may end in blood?
You'll lose your life, and I shall lose my place,
My mistress all, for that half-girlish face.

THE HEBREW CHRONICLE ✧ This is I Kings, i, where Abishag the Shunammite, a "*damsel very fair*", is recruited to warm the bed & bones of the ageing King David. In fact, the *medicine* did not work so well in David's case, because he dies in the following chapter.



THAT HALF-GIRLISH FACE ✧ The much-imitated portrait by Thomas Phillips (1813) now at Newstead.

CLXXII

“Had it but been for a stout cavalier
Of twenty-five or thirty (come, make haste)—
But for a child, what piece of work is here!
I really, madam, wonder at your taste
(Come, sir, get in)—my master must be near:
There, for the present, at the least, he’s fast,
And if we can but till the morning keep
Our counsel—(Juan, mind, you must not sleep).”

CLXXIII

Now, Don Alfonso entering, but alone,
Closed the oration of the trusty maid:
She loiter’d, and he told her to be gone,
An order somewhat sullenly obey’d;
However, present remedy was none,
And no great good seem’d answer’d if she stay’d:
Regarding both with slow and sidelong view,
She snuff’d the candle, curtsied, and withdrew.


CLXXIV

Alfonso paused a minute—then begun
Some strange excuses for his late proceeding;
He would not justify what he had done,
To say the best, it was extreme ill-breeding;
But there were ample reasons for it, none
Of which he specified in this his pleading:
His speech was a fine sample, on the whole,
Of rhetoric, which the learn’d call “rigmarole”.

CLXXV

Julia said nought; though all the while there rose
A ready answer, which at once enables
A matron, who her husband’s foible knows,
By a few timely words to turn the tables,
Which, if it does not silence, still must pose,—
Even if it should comprise a pack of fables;
’T is to retort with firmness, and when he
Suspects with “one”, do you reproach with “three”.

CLXXVI

 80'53"

Julia, in fact, had tolerable grounds,—
 Alfonso's loves with Inez were well known,
 But whether 't was that one's own guilt confounds—
 But that can't be, as has been often shown,
 A lady with apologies abounds;—
 It might be that her silence sprang alone
 From delicacy to Don Juan's ear,
 To whom she knew his mother's fame was dear.

TOLERABLE GROUNDS ✧ Ironical that, having made such bitter fun of attorneys, B. begins to use their language when he wants to be *forensic*. See "*one more motive*" in the next Stanza, too.

CLXXVII

There might be one more motive, which makes two;
 Alfonso ne'er to Juan had alluded,—
 Mention'd his jealousy but never who
 Had been the happy lover, he concluded,
 Conceal'd amongst his premises; 't is true,
 His mind the more o'er this its mystery brooded;
 To speak of Inez now were, one may say,
 Like throwing Juan in Alfonso's way.

CLXXVIII

A hint, in tender cases, is enough;
 Silence is best, besides there is a "tact"—
 (That modern phrase appears to me sad stuff,
 But it will serve to keep my verse compact)—
 Which keeps, when push'd by questions rather rough,
 A lady always distant from the fact:
 The charming creatures lie with such a grace,
 There's nothing so becoming to the face.

THAT MODERN PHRASE ✧ The OED says the word "tact" meaning skill in dealing with delicate situations was an import into the English language from the French (where it referred to a sense of touch) around the start of the 19th Century.

CLXXIX

They blush, and we believe them; at least I
 Have always done so; 't is of no great use,
 In any case, attempting a reply,
 For then their eloquence grows quite profuse;
 And when at length they 're out of breath, they sigh,
 And cast their languid eyes down, and let loose
 A tear or two, and then we make it up;
 And then—and then—and then—sit down and sup.

CLXXX

Alfonso closed his speech, and begg'd her pardon,
Which Julia half withheld, and then half granted,
And laid conditions he thought very hard on,
Denying several little things he wanted:
He stood like Adam lingering near his garden,
With useless penitence perplex'd and haunted,
Beseeching she no further would refuse,
When, lo! he stumbled o'er a pair of shoes.

CLXXXI

A pair of shoes!—what then? not much, if they
Are such as fit with ladies' feet, but these
(No one can tell how much I grieve to say)
Were masculine; to see them, and to seize,
Was but a moment's act.—Ah! well-a-day!
My teeth begin to chatter, my veins freeze—
Alfonso first examined well their fashion,
And then flew out into another passion.

CLXXXII

He left the room for his relinquish'd sword,
And Julia instant to the closet flew.
"Fly, Juan, fly! for heaven's sake—not a word—
The door is open—you may yet slip through
The passage you so often have explored—
Here is the garden-key—Fly—fly—Adieu!
Haste—haste! I hear Alfonso's hurrying feet—
Day has not broke—there's no one in the street:"

CLXX XIII

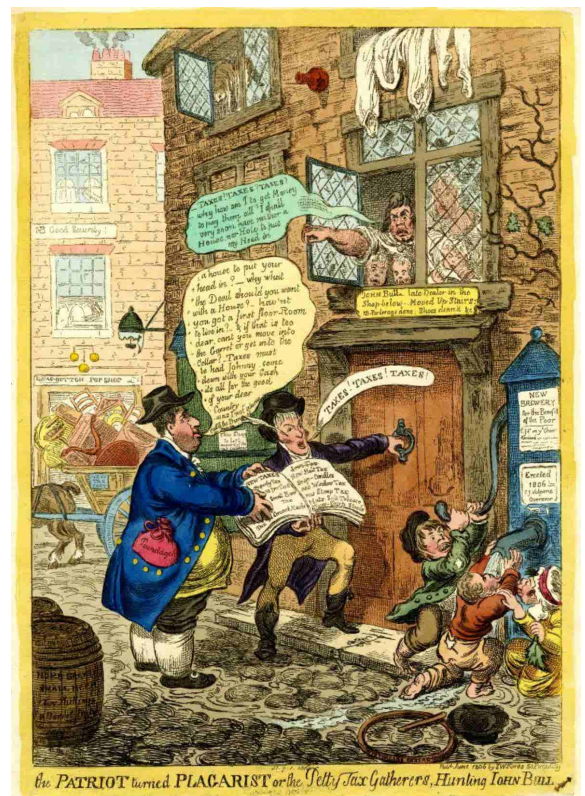
None can say that this was not good advice,
The only mischief was, it came too late;
Of all experience 't is the usual price,
A sort of income-tax laid on by fate:
Juan had reach'd the room-door in a trice,
And might have done so by the garden-gate,
But met Alfonso in his dressing-gown,
Who threaten'd death—so Juan knock'd him down.

LIKE ADAM LINGERING NEAR HIS GARDEN ♦ In the closing scenes of Book XII of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve, expelled from the Garden by the Archangel Michael, linger a moment outside the Eastern gates. Alfonso, like Adam no doubt, now contemplates "uselessly" his own responsibility for the fiasco. Until, that is . . .

SHOES ✧ Once again Byron skilfully delays the “reveal” until the last word of the stanza.

MY TEETH BEGIN TO CHATTER ✧ We're in full melodrama mode now! "Well-a-day"!

THE PASSAGE ✧ *A double entendre*



INCOME-TAX In 1799 the government of William Pitt levied the first modern tax on incomes (1 or 10 per cent) to support rearmament against potential threats from Napoleon. James Gillray's 1806 cartoon shows the householder unsuccessfully trying to hide from the tax-collectors. The brats at lower-right are drinking from a pump described as "A new brewery for the benefit of the poor ..."

CLXXXIV

Dire was the scuffle, and out went the light;
 Antonia cried out "Rape!" and Julia "Fire!"
 But not a servant stirr'd to aid the fight.
 Alfonso, pommell'd to his heart's desire,
 Swore lustily he'd be revenged this night;
 And Juan, too, blasphemed an octave higher;
 His blood was up: though young, he was a Tartar,
 And not at all disposed to prove a martyr.

CLXXXV

Alfonso's sword had dropp'd ere he could draw it,
 And they continued battling hand to hand,
 For Juan very luckily ne'er saw it;
 His temper not being under great command,
 If at that moment he had chanced to claw it,
 Alfonso's days had not been in the land
 Much longer.—Think of husbands', lovers' lives!
 And how ye may be doubly widows—wives!

CLXXXVI

Alfonso grappled to detain the foe,
 And Juan throttled him to get away,
 And blood ('t was from the nose) began to flow;
 At last, as they more faintly wrestling lay,
 Juan contrived to give an awkward blow,
 And then his only garment quite gave way;
 He fled, like Joseph, leaving it; but there,
 I doubt, all likeness ends between the pair.

CLXXXVII

Lights came at length, and men, and maids, who found
 An awkward spectacle their eyes before;
 Antonia in hysterics, Julia swoon'd,
 Alfonso leaning, breathless, by the door;
 Some half-torn drapery scatter'd on the ground,
 Some blood, and several footsteps, but no more:
 Juan the gate gain'd, turn'd the key about,
 And liking not the inside, lock'd the out.

POMMELL'D TO HIS HEART'S DESIRE ✧ The cuckhold as
 massochist

A TARTAR, ✧ Europeans and Russians called the Mongol
 invaders of the second half of the 13th century "Tartars",
 although the Tatars were in fact a central Asian turkic-
 speaking people driven westward by the ferocious sweep
 of Ghengis (and Batu) Khan's armies.




LIKE JOSEPH ✧ Genesis 39:12 tells the story of
 Joseph's servitude in the house of the Egyptian Cap-
 tain Potiphar, whose wife tried to seduce the hand-
 some boy. When he refused she grabbed his clothing,
 but Joseph shed his robe and fled, naked. Potiphar's
 wife then cried out for help saying that he had tried to
 rape her, holding out his garment as proof. Of course,
 Byron has reversed the story. The painting is by Guido
 Reni, 1630

CLXXXVIII

Here ends this canto.—Need I sing, or say,
 How Juan naked, favour'd by the night,
 Who favours what she should not, found his way,
 And reach'd his home in an unseemly plight?
 The pleasant scandal which arose next day,
 The nine days' wonder which was brought to light,
 And how Alfonso sued for a divorce,
 Were in the English newspapers, of course.

CLXXXIX

 86'15"

If you would like to see the whole proceedings,
 The depositions, and the cause at full,
 The names of all the witnesses, the pleadings
 Of counsel to nonsuit, or to annul,
 There's more than one edition, and the readings
 Are various, but they none of them are dull;
 The best is that in short-hand ta'en by Gurney,
 Who to Madrid on purpose made a journey.

CXC

But Donna Inez, to divert the train
 Of one of the most circulating scandals
 That had for centuries been known in Spain,
 At least since the retirement of the Vandals,
 First vow'd (and never had she vow'd in vain)
 To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles;
 And then, by the advice of some old ladies,
 She sent her son to be shipp'd off from Cadiz.

CXCI

She had resolved that he should travel through
 All European climes, by land or sea,
 To mend his former morals, and get new,
 Especially in France and Italy
 (At least this is the thing most people do).
 Julia was sent into a convent: she
 Grieved, but, perhaps, her feelings may be better
 Shown in the following copy of her Letter:—

THE ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS ✧ *PC* notes that Byron often directed his satire at the English press that had treated him unfairly during his separation, using them as “emblem’s of the age’s inadequate self-image.” The “*of course*” here reflects Byron’s scorn of the scandalmongering in his case.

NONSUIT ✧ A finding against the plaintiff who fails to provide sufficient evidence to found his claims in a civil suit.

GURNEY ✧ William Brodie Gurney was the official Parliamentary shorthand writer who also reported testimony in trials for the press. There is no record of his ever visiting Spain.

VANDALS ✧ A Germanic tribe that the Huns and Goths in the 5th century pushed south from their homelands, first in to northern Spain and eventually, under their King Genseric, into north Africa. There, they established a successful kingdom based at Carthage, absorbing Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica and finally sacking Rome in 455. Later writers described their conquest as barbaric (“*vandalism*”) but modern scholars consider them important preservers and transmitters of Roman culture. Note that line 1516 of the poem in Byron’s manuscript reads: “*Since Roderic’s Goths, or older Genseric’s Vandals,*”

SHIPP’D OFF FROM CADIZ ✧ Launching Juan on his epic adventure ...

CXCII

“They tell me ’t is decided; you depart:
 ’T is wise—’t is well, but not the less a pain;
 I have no further claim on your young heart,
 Mine is the victim, and would be again;
 To love too much has been the only art
 I used;—I write in haste, and if a stain
 Be on this sheet, ’t is not what it appears;
 My eyeballs burn and throb, but have no tears.

CXCIII

“I loved, I love you, for this love have lost
 State, station, heaven, mankind’s, my own esteem,
 And yet can not regret what it hath cost,
 So dear is still the memory of that dream;
 Yet, if I name my guilt, ’t is not to boast,
 None can deem harshlier of me than I deem:
 I trace this scrawl because I cannot rest—
 I’ve nothing to reproach, or to request.

CXCIV

“Man’s love is of man’s life a thing apart,
 ’T is woman’s whole existence; man may range
 The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;
 Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
 Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
 And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
 Men have all these resources, we but one,
 To love again, and be again undone.

MAN’S LOVE . . . WHOLE EXISTENCE ✧ Among the most quoted phrases in the entire epic. But how few who know it know that Byron wrote it, or where to find it in his works?

CXCv

“You will proceed in pleasure, and in pride,
 Beloved and loving many; all is o’er
 For me on earth, except some years to hide
 My shame and sorrow deep in my heart’s core;
 These I could bear, but cannot cast aside
 The passion which still rages as before—
 And so farewell—forgive me, love me—No,
 That word is idle now—but let it go.

CXCVI

“My breast has been all weakness, is so yet;
 But still I think I can collect my mind;
 My blood still rushes where my spirit’s set,
 As roll the waves before the settled wind;
 My heart is feminine, nor can forget—
 To all, except one image, madly blind;
 So shakes the needle, and so stands the pole,
 As vibrates my fond heart to my fix’d soul.

CXCVII

“I have no more to say, but linger still,
 And dare not set my seal upon this sheet,
 And yet I may as well the task fulfil,
 My misery can scarce be more complete:
 I had not lived till now, could sorrow kill;
 Death shuns the wretch who fain the blow would meet,
 And I must even survive this last adieu,
 And bear with life, to love and pray for you!”

CXCVIII

This note was written upon gilt-edged paper
 With a neat little crow-quill, slight and new:
 Her small white hand could hardly reach the taper,
 It trembled as magnetic needles do,
 And yet she did not let one tear escape her;
 The seal a sun-flower; “*Elle vous suit partout*,”
 The motto cut upon a white cornelian;
 The wax was superfine, its hue vermilion.

ELLE VOUS SUIV PARTOUT ✧ “She follows you everywhere.” Alas, Juan’s passion for Julia is much briefer; erased in the next Canto by sea-sickness.


CXCIX

This was Don Juan’s earliest scrape; but whether
 I shall proceed with his adventures is
 Dependent on the public altogether;
 We’ll see, however, what they say to this:
 Their favour in an author’s cap’s a feather,
 And no great mischief’s done by their caprice;
 And if their approbation we experience,
 Perhaps they’ll have some more about a year hence.

CC

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
 Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
 With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
 A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,
 New characters; the episodes are three:
 A panoramic view of hell's in training,
 After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
 So that my name of Epic's no misnomer.

CCI

 92'16"

All these things will be specified in time,
 With strict regard to Aristotle's rules,
 The "Vade Mecum" of the true sublime,
 Which makes so many poets, and some fools:
 Prose poets like blank-verse, I'm fond of rhyme,
 Good workmen never quarrel with their tools;
 I've got new mythological machinery,
 And very handsome supernatural scenery.

CCII

There's only one slight difference between
 Me and my epic brethren gone before,
 And here the advantage is my own, I ween
 (Not that I have not several merits more,
 But this will more peculiarly be seen);
 They so embellish, that 't is quite a bore
 Their labyrinth of fables to thread through,
 Whereas this story's actually true.

CCIII

If any person doubt it, I appeal
 To history, tradition, and to facts,
 To newspapers, whose truth all know and feel,
 To plays in five, and operas in three acts;
 All these confirm my statement a good deal,
 But that which more completely faith exacts
 Is that myself, and several now in Seville,
 "Saw" Juan's last elopement with the devil.

A LIST OF SHIPS, AND CAPTAINS, AND KINGS ✧ The classical epics, especially the *Illiad* of Homer and Virgil's *Aeneid* do contain lists of heroes and leaders as a sort of war memorial.

A PANORAMIC VIEW OF HELL ✧ Both the *Odyssey* of Homer and the *Aeneid* include scenes in which the Hero descends to Hades to visit comrades who died in battle or who lie unburied. Of course, the original Don Juan went to hell; and stayed there. Perhaps at this early stage of his "unplanned" epic, Byron thought of sending Juan, too. Thomas Medwin in his unreliable report of Byron's conversations says Byron told friends that Juan might end on the scaffold: guillotined in the French Revolution. But if he planned a visit to Hell, Byron did not live long enough to compose the verse.

ARISTOTLE ... SUBLIME ✧ A vade mecum (Latin for "go with me") was a pocket-book of useful information. Aristotle's *Poetics* might be read as an "instruction manual" for poets and dramatists.

MACHINERY ... SCENERY ✧ Theatrical references.

LABYRINTH OF FABLES ✧ Probably a reference to Southey's oriental epics *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama*, both of which have obscure, tangled plots based on sorcery and demonism. Contemporary critics were unimpressed; the poems today are forgotten.

NEWSPAPERS, WHOSE TRUTH ALL KNOW AND FEEL ✧ 'Fake news' is not a recent phenomenon. Newspapers in the early 19th century, too, tended to confirm their readers' biases and to have as firm a hold on 'truth' as theatre or Opera: whose libretti have a notoriously loose grasp on reality.

MYSELF, AND SEVERAL NOW IN SEVILLE ✧ The narrator from the early part of the Canto now seems to reappear briefly to offer a completely misleading testimony.

CCIV

If ever I should condescend to prose,
 I'll write poetical commandments, which
 Shall supersede beyond all doubt all those
 That went before; in these I shall enrich
 My text with many things that no one knows,
 And carry precept to the highest pitch:
 I'll call the work "Longinus o'er a Bottle,
 Or, Every Poet his "own" Aristotle."

CCV

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;
 Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;
 Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
 The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy:
 With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
 And Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy:
 Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor
 Commit—flirtation with the muse of Moore.

CCVI

Thou shalt not covet Mr. Sotheby's Muse,
 His Pegasus, nor anything that's his;
 Thou shalt not bear false witness like "the Blues"
 (There's "one", at least, is very fond of this);
 Thou shalt not write, in short, but what I choose:
 This is true criticism, and you may kiss—
 Exactly as you please, or not,—the rod;
 But if you don't, I'll lay it on, by G-d!

CCVII

If any person should presume to assert
 This story is not moral, first, I pray,
 That they will not cry out before they're hurt,
 Then that they'll read it o'er again, and say
 (But, doubtless, nobody will be so pert)
 That this is not a moral tale, though gay;
 Besides, in Canto Twelfth, I mean to show
 The very place where wicked people go.

POETICAL COMMANDMENTS ✧ This "blasphemous" line and the jokey echo of the Ten Commandments in the next two verses caused a furore among some stuffer contemporary critics that is hard to understand today. Byron even feared, at one point, that publication under his own name might lead to his conviction for blasphemy which would endanger his guardianship of his daughter Ada.

LONGINUS ✧ We've encountered the author of *The Sublime before*.

MILTON, DRYDEN, POPE ✧ Byron's Trinity of English verse; the last the greatest. Pope was, possibly, the only satirist in English who surpassed Byron for fierce wit.

SOUTHEY ✧ B.'s rhyme of the Poet Laureate's name with "mouthy", two lines later, adds the injury of mispronunciation to this insult of his poetic nemesis. I'm ashamed to say, I missed the trick in the recording accompanying this text.

THE SECOND DRUNK ✧ This is lit. crit. as a blood-sport. Coleridge alone replied to these slanders with a deft wit that Byron must have appreciated: "*My Lord, / That I should be selected by you to share such immortality as Time may confer upon your Don Juan demands my acknowledgement, the quality of which is enlarged by the charge of inebriety that you prefer against me. Had you adorned me with indolence and irresolution the commendation had been just, but the more elegant acquirement of intemperance it were flattery to attribute to me. This example of your Lordship's taste and knowledge would embolden me to esteem you as among the first of our great writers if you would condescend first to avoid a too servile flattery of your contemporaries, and next to obtain correct information on the habits of those you celebrate. The sobriety of this letter is the unhappy proof of the extravagance of your praise. I am / your Lordship's obedient sober servant, / S.T.Coleridge.*" (Quoted by **PC**)

HIPPOCRENE ✧ A stream on Mount Helicon that was supposed to be a source of poetic inspiration.

MR. SOTHEY ✧ A minor poet whom Byron disliked, believing he had written an anonymous critical review of Byron's poem *The Prisoner of Chilon*.

PEGASUS ✧ A winged horse that sprang from the spilled blood of the Gorgon Medusa when Perseus beheaded her. Used by writers since the Renaissance as an icon of poetic inspiration.

THE BLUES ✧ Bluestockings, according to **PC**. The "one" is probably Lady Byron.

IN CANTO TWELFTH ✧ An unreliable promise, naturally. By Canto XII, Byron is not even hinting at the close of the Epic or a descent into Hell. Juan finds himself, instead, introduced to London and St. James Palace.

CCVIII

If, after all, there should be some so blind
 To their own good this warning to despise,
 Led by some tortuosity of mind,
 Not to believe my verse and their own eyes,
 And cry that they “the moral cannot find,”
 I tell him, if a clergyman, he lies;
 Should captains the remark, or critics, make,
 They also lie too—under a mistake.

CCIX

The public approbation I expect,
 And beg they’ll take my word about the moral,
 Which I with their amusement will connect
 (So children cutting teeth receive a coral);
 Meantime, they’ll doubtless please to recollect
 My epical pretensions to the laurel:
 For fear some prudish readers should grow skittish,
 I’ve bribed *my grandmother’s review*—the British.

MY GRANDMOTHER’S REVIEW ✧ The Editor of the British Review was incautious enough to deny receiving any such bribe.

CCX

I sent it in a letter to the Editor,
 Who thank’d me duly by return of post—
 I’m for a handsome article his creditor;
 Yet, if my gentle Muse he please to roast,
 And break a promise after having made it her,
 Denying the receipt of what it cost,
 And smear his page with gall instead of honey,
 All I can say is—that he had the money.

CCXI

I think that with this *holy new alliance*
 I may ensure the public, and defy
 All other magazines of art or science,
 Daily, or monthly, or three monthly; I
 Have not essay’d to multiply their clients,
 Because they tell me ’t were in vain to try,
 And that the Edinburgh Review and Quarterly
 Treat a dissenting author very martyrly.


THIS HOLY NEW ALLIANCE ✧ The “Holy Alliance” (pun on “wholly”) was an alliance of Russia, Prussia and Austria — three reactionary, autocratic, states — formed at the instigation of Tsar Alexander I (whom Byron attacks later in the poem).

THE EDINBURGH REVIEW AND QUARTERLY ✧ The Edinburgh Review, that demonstrated its political allegiance to the Whig party by its buff-and-blue covers, had “martyred” Byron’s first published book of poems (*Hours of Idleness*) in 1807. He took revenge in 1809 with a brilliant, fiery broadside (*English Bards and Scots Reviewers*) that first brought him to wide public attention as a satirist. In the same year Byron’s publisher John Murray set up a rival Tory-leaning review, the Quarterly. Both magazines were inclined to skewer authors they did not approve.

CCXII

“Non ego hoc ferrem calida juventâ
 Consule Planco”, Horace said, and so
 Say I; by which quotation there is meant a
 Hint that some six or seven good years ago
 (Long ere I dreamt of dating from the Brenta)
 I was most ready to return a blow,
 And would not brook at all this sort of thing
 In my hot youth—when George the Third was King.

CCXIII

 97'41"

But now at thirty years my hair is grey
 (I wonder what it will be like at forty?
 I thought of a peruke the other day)—
 My heart is not much greener; and, in short, I
 Have squander'd my whole summer while 't was May,
 And feel no more the spirit to retort; I
 Have spent my life, both interest and principal,
 And deem not, what I deem'd, my soul invincible.

CCXIV

No more—no more—Oh! never more on me
 The freshness of the heart can fall like dew,
 Which out of all the lovely things we see
 Extracts emotions beautiful and new,
 Hived in our bosoms like the bag o' the bee:
 Think'st thou the honey with those objects grew?
 Alas! 't was not in them, but in thy power
 To double even the sweetness of a flower.

CCXV

No more—no more—Oh! never more, my heart,
 Canst thou be my sole world, my universe!
 Once all in all, but now a thing apart,
 Thou canst not be my blessing or my curse:
 The illusion's gone for ever, and thou art
 Insensible, I trust, but none the worse,
 And in thy stead I've got a deal of judgment,
 Though heaven knows how it ever found a lodgment.

'NON EGO HOC FERREM ... ✧ “I should not have born such things in the heat of my youth when Plancus was Consul”. Horace — a Byron favorite — referred to the Consul of 42 BCE when he was twenty-three. He claims to have grown mellow with age, but he lived only to the age of 56.

THE BRENTA ✧ Byron rented a villa at La Mira on the River Brenta when he arrived in Venice in 1817.

IN MY HOT YOUTH ✧ Byron wittily recapitulates the verse from Horace. George III was still King as he wrote this, but had been sequestered for several years as mentally unstable.

AT FORTY ✧ Byron was never to know. He died when he was not yet thirty-seven.

CCXVI

My days of love are over; me no more
 The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow,
 Can make the fool of which they made before,—
 In short, I must not lead the life I did do;
 The credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er,
 The copious use of claret is forbid too,
 So for a good old-gentlemanly vice,
 I think I must take up with avarice.


CCXVII

Ambition was my idol, which was broken
 Before the shrines of Sorrow, and of Pleasure;
 And the two last have left me many a token
 O'er which reflection may be made at leisure:
 Now, like Friar Bacon's brazen head, I've spoken,
 "Time is, Time was, Time's past:"—a chymic treasure
 Is glittering youth, which I have spent betimes—
 My heart in passion, and my head on rhymes.

CCXVIII

What is the end of Fame? 't is but to fill
 A certain portion of uncertain paper:
 Some liken it to climbing up a hill,
 Whose summit, like all hills, is lost in vapour;
 For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill,
 And bards burn what they call their "midnight taper,"
 To have, when the original is dust,
 A name, a wretched picture, and worse bust.

CCXIX

 100'45"

What are the hopes of man? Old Egypt's King
 Cheops erected the first pyramid
 And largest, thinking it was just the thing
 To keep his memory whole, and mummy hid;
 But somebody or other rummaging,
 Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
 Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
 Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops.

MY DAYS OF LOVE ARE OVER ✧ Byron completed the first draft of Canto I of *Don Juan* in September 1818 at the Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice after spending the spring and summer of that year indulging himself in energetic sexual adventures with a variety of lovers from Carnival society and the *demi-monde* (and contracting the clap for his troubles). It's quite possible this stanza expresses real exhaustion. But it is also an imitation of one verse of the first ode of Book 4 of Horace's *Odes* in which the poet, unusually, invokes the goddess Venus asking her to leave him in peace because, now, neither women nor boys, nor the hope for love returned, nor drinking companions, nor temples decked with floral wreaths hold any interest for him ...

MANY A TOKEN ✧ Including the STD he picked up in Venice

FRIAR BACON'S BRAZEN HEAD ✧ A reference to Robert Greene's historical comedy "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay" (1594). Greene portrays the 13th philosopher and experimental naturalist, Roger Bacon, as an alchemist and magician who creates a brazen head for the purposes of his spells. While he sleeps the head speaks ("Time is, Time was ...") to Bacon's servant but then falls to the floor and shatters.

CHYMIC ✧ Here, meaning "alchemical"



WORSE BUST ✧ Byron disliked the marble bust — commissioned by Hobhouse — that the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen made of him in 1817. According to Thorvaldsen, Byron said his own expression was "more unhappy". He later wrote in his *Journal* that a bust, unlike a painted portrait, "smacks of something of a hankering for public fame rather than private remembrance." It is, in fact, one of his finest portraits.

CCXX

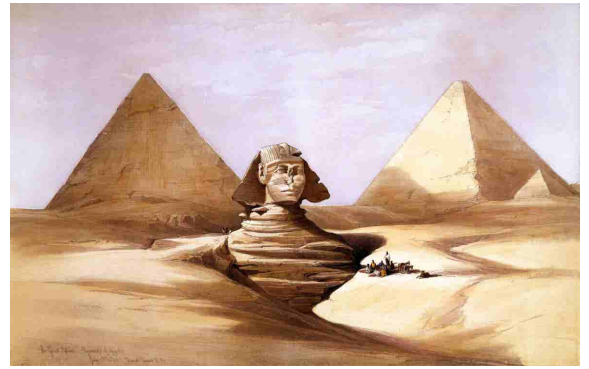
But I being fond of true philosophy,
 Say very often to myself, "Alas!
 All things that have been born were born to die,
 And flesh (which Death mows down to hay) is grass;
 You've pass'd your youth not so unpleasantly,
 And if you had it o'er again—'t would pass—
 So thank your stars that matters are no worse,
 And read your Bible, sir, and mind your purse."

CCXXI

But for the present, gentle reader! and
 Still gentler purchaser! the bard—that's I—
 Must, with permission, shake you by the hand,
 And so "Your humble servant, and good-b'ye!"
 We meet again, if we should understand
 Each other; and if not, I shall not try
 Your patience further than by this short sample—
 'T were well if others follow'd my example.

CCXXII

"Go, little book, from this my solitude!
 I cast thee on the waters—go thy ways!
 And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,
 The world will find thee after many days."
 When Southey's read, and Wordsworth understood,
 I can't help putting in my claim to praise—
 The four first rhymes are Southey's every line:
 For God's sake, reader! take them not for mine.



CHEOPS ✎ Byron may have seen a report in the *Quarterly Review* of April 1817 on the discovery of the "subterranean" chamber in the Pyramid of Cheops (Khufu) by the Italian egyptologist Giovanni Caviglia. Cheops' burial chamber in the Great Pyramid — containing his broken, unfinished, empty sarcophagus — was re-discovered, first, by the Arab caliph Al-Mamun in about 820 CE. If ever it contained the King's mummy and funerary goods, they had been looted in antiquity. The drawing is by the Scots painter David Roberts R.A. (1839)

FLESH . . . IS GRASS ✧ Isaiah 40, 6-8: "*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth / Because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it / Surely the people is as grass / But the word of our Lord shall stand forever*".

GO, LITTLE BOOK ✧ Byron quotes from the last verse of Southey's 1816 poem *The Lay of the Laureate, or Carmen Nuptiale* (Wedding Song) a piece of grovelling sycophancy celebrating the wedding of George IV's daughter Charlotte with Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg.

Canto II



✍ **The Raft of the Medusa:** Canto II fulfils Byron’s promise in Canto I to adopt (sort of) epic themes, including a storm, a shipwreck and a grisly tale of *survival at sea*. In this case, Juan is the only survivor. Having failed to save his shipmates from their folly he lands, exhausted, on a mysterious Ionian island. The “epic model” is not entirely *tongue-in-cheek*: there are echoes of Homer’s *Odessey* in Canto II, specifically of Book VI, where Odysseus arrives — after two days and two night swimming — on the (equally mysterious) island of Skhería. This monumental romantic painting (1819) by Théodore Géricault depicts the last stages of a naval disaster when the French naval frigate *Méduse* ran aground off the coast of Mauretania in 1816. There were boats for only half the 400 people on board. Only 15 of the 147 who had leaped on a hastily constructed raft were rescued. The decimation of the survivors was due to fighting, suicide, drowning and exposure. At one point — only 4 days into their 13-day ordeal — the survivors, who had no food and little water began to eat the dead. In the early 19th century, shipwrecks held a frightening fascination for everyone; much as airplane crashes, although far less frequent, hold for us today. Before steel hulls, radio communications and satellite navigation they were a deadly risk for travellers and were often never fully investigated or explained.

I

Oh ye who teach the ingenuous youth of nations,
 Holland, France, England, Germany, or Spain,
 I pray ye flog them upon all occasions;
 It mends their morals, never mind the pain.
 The best of mothers and of educations
 In Juan's case were but employed in vain,
 Since in a way that's rather of the oddest, he
 Became divested of his native modesty.

II

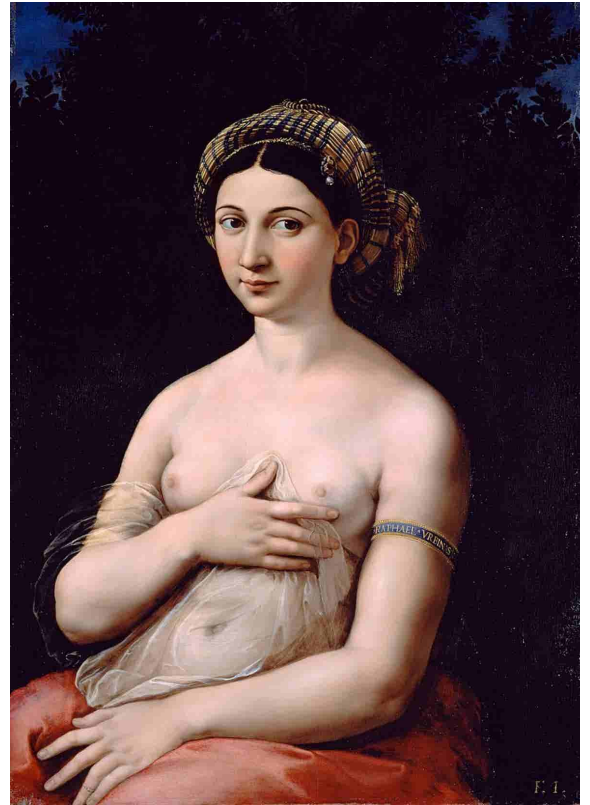
Had he but been placed at a public school,
 In the third form or even in the fourth,
 His daily task had kept his fancy cool -
 At least had he been nurtured in the north.
 Spain may prove an exception to the rule,
 But then exceptions always prove its worth.
 A lad of sixteen causing a divorce
 Puzzled his tutors very much, of course.

III

I can't say that it puzzles me at all,
 If all things be considered: first, there was
 His lady mother, mathematical,
 A—never mind; his tutor, an old ass;
 A pretty woman (that's quite natural,
 Or else the thing had hardly come to pass);
 A husband rather old, not much in unity
 With his young wife; a time and opportunity.

IV

Well—well, the world must turn upon its axis,
 And all mankind turn with it, heads or tails,
 And live and die, make love and pay our taxes,
 And as the veering wind shifts, shift our sails.
 The king commands us, and the doctor quacks us,
 The priest instructs, and so our life exhales,
 A little breath, love, wine, ambition, fame,
 Fighting, devotion, dust—perhaps a name.



DATES ✂ Byron drafted Canto II at the Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice between December 13, 1818 and January 19, 1819. He had recently received payment for the sale of Newstead Abbey and had made arrangements with Hobhouse and his new business manager Douglas Kinnaird to pay the majority of his remaining English debts. He had also finally broken off with his fiery Venetian lover Maria Cogni (*La Fornarina* that is, the *baker's wife*). Canto I of *Don Juan* was in the hands of Murray and, despite Hobhouse's insistence it was unpublishable, Byron enthusiastically spent the month before the start of the Venice *Carnivale* on the second Canto, launching Juan on his European adventures and his first great romance. Murray published Canto II along with Canto I on 15 July, 1819.

The image is Raphael's portrait (about 1518) of his lover, Maguerita Luti, also known as "*La Fornarina*".

HIS NATIVE MODESTY ✧ That is, his virginity

A PUBLIC SCHOOL ✧ Byron was educated at Harrow, a "public school" where, despite such schools' reputation for brutality and his often pugnacious and disruptive behaviour, he had been treated with kindness and understanding by the Masters.

KEPT HIS FANCY COOL ✧ Byron's own fancies were warmed by his schooldays. It was at Harrow that he formed his first romantic male attachments — probably more than sentimental — that lasted well into his later life.

NURTURED IN THE NORTH ✧ See [Canto I.LXIV](#) where Byron insists that passions inflamed in southern climes by the warmth of the sun are cooled to indifference in the "moral North".

HIS TUTOR ✧ In Canto I we learn that Juan's mother Inez hired "learnèd tutors" to teach expurgated classics to young Juan. Presumably Pedrillo was one of these.

QUACKS ✧ To treat in the manner of a quack; to administer quack medicines (OED)

V

I said that Juan had been sent to Cadiz,
 A pretty town, I recollect it well.
 'Tis there the mart of the colonial trade is
 (Or was, before Peru learned to rebel),
 And such sweet girls—I mean, such graceful ladies.
 Their very walk would make your bosom swell;
 I can't describe it, though so much it strike,
 Nor liken it—I never saw the like.

VI

An Arab horse, a stately stag, a barb
 New broke, a cameleopard, a gazelle -
 No, none of these will do. And then their garb,
 Their veil and petticoat! Alas, to dwell
 Upon such things would very near absorb
 A canto. Then their feet and ankles—well,
 Thank heaven I've got no metaphor quite ready
 (And so, my sober Muse, come, let's be steady,

VII

Chaste Muse—well, if you must, you must)—the veil
 Thrown back a moment with the glancing hand,
 While the o'erpowering eye that turns you pale
 Flashes into the heart. All sunny land
 Of love, when I forget you, may I fail
 To — say my prayers; but never was there planned
 A dress through which the eyes give such a volley,
 Excepting the Venetian fazzioli.

VIII

But to our tale. The Donna Inez sent
 Her son to Cadiz only to embark;
 To stay there had not answered her intent.
 But why? We leave the reader in the dark.
 'Twas for a voyage that the young man was meant,
 As if a Spanish ship were Noah's ark,
 To wean him from the wickedness of earth
 And send him like a dove of promise forth.

CADIZ ✧ Byron visited the Spanish port city for a few days at the end of July 1809 with Hobhouse *en route* to the Eastern Mediterranean, during his youthful tour. It had become the port of entry for goods from Spain's declining empire — taking over from Seville — when sandbars made the river Guadalquivir impassible in the 18th century.

PERU ✧ Peru did not declare its independence with Spain until 1821, two years after this Canto was drafted, although Chile and Paraguay had already done so.

YOUR BOSOM ✧ Byron means another kind of tumescence...

BARB... CAMELEOPARD ✧ A horse from the Barbary Coast of Africa... a giraffe (*obsl.*)

SAY MY PRAYERS ✧ As *PC* notes, this travesties Psalm 137: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her cunning."

FAZZIOLI ✧ A sort of veil (*lit.* "little kerchief") worn in Venice.

IN THE DARK ✧ Well...only readers who did not get Byron's hints in the previous three verses.

A DOVE OF PROMISE ✧ In *Geneis* 7, Noah sent a dove into the air to search for land amid the flood waters

IX

Don Juan bade his valet pack his things
 According to direction, then received
 A lecture and some money. For four springs
 He was to travel, and though Inez grieved
 (As every kind of parting has its stings),
 She hoped he would improve, perhaps believed.
 A letter too she gave (he never read it)
 Of good advice—and two or three of credit.

X

In the meantime, to pass her hours away,
 Brave Inez now set up a Sunday school
 For naughty children, who would rather play
 (Like truant rogues) the devil or the fool.
 Infants of three years old were taught that day,
 Dunces were whipt or set upon a stool.
 The great success of Juan's education
 Spurred her to teach another generation.

XI

Juan embarked, the ship got under way,
 The wind was fair, the water passing rough.
 A devil of a sea rolls in that bay,
 As I, who've crossed it oft, know well enough.
 And standing upon deck, the dashing spray
 Flies in one's face and makes it weather-tough.
 And there he stood to take and take again
 His first, perhaps his last, farewell of Spain.

XII

I can't but say it is an awkward sight
 To see one's native land receding through
 The growing waters; it unmans one quite,
 Especially when life is rather new.
 I recollect Great Britain's coast looks white,
 But almost every other country's blue,
 When gazing on them, mystified by distance,
 We enter on our nautical existence.

SHE HOPED HE WOULD IMPROVE ✧ The notional purpose of the "Grand Tour" undertaken by wealthy young men in the 18th century was to complete their education by exposure to the great arts and historical sites of Europe. In reality, this was often an incidental benefit. The Tour allowed them to "sow their wild oats" abroad, conveniently out of sight and without consequences at home.

LETTERS OF CREDIT ✧ Young noblemen on their Tour did not carry cash (too risky) but letters of credit that could be drawn down at foreign banks.

DUNCES WERE WHIPT ✧ The original, improper and much funnier final couplet of this verse read


*Their manners mending and their morals curing
 She taught them to suppress their vice and urine.*

The proof copy of Canto II shows the wounds of vigorous editing and erasures at this point: evidence of a dispute between B. and Hobhouse. **PC** notes: "Hobhouse's comment may read in part '*Disgusting Gross indelicacy – staring out ...*' Part of Byron's answer may be '*... read Swift if you want coarseness – and if you want real indelicacy read Moore – but don't attempt to saddle my "Scherzos" with that imputation.*'" B. scored through the offending couplet, however, replacing it with the version now included in most editions.

CROSSED IT OFT ✧ In fact, B. had crossed it only once in 1809. He is at pains, however, throughout this Canto to insist on his first-hand nautical knowledge; probably to lend credence to his exotic account of the storm and shipwreck.

OUR NAUTICAL EXISTENCE ✧ B. hinting that he feels marooned in Italy? Juan may — for all B. knows at this point in his poem — have seen the last of Spain, just as *he* may have seen the last of Britain. Still, Byron is less at sea than he may fear. He began this Canto on the same night he fell in love with the Contessa Teresa Guiccioli. As he writes, his final, mature, romance is about to begin.

XIII

 5'35"

So Juan stood bewildered on the deck.
 The wind sung, cordage strained, and sailors swore,
 And the ship creaked, the town became a speck,
 From which away so fair and fast they bore.
 The best of remedies is a beefsteak
 Against seasickness; try it, sir, before
 You sneer, and I assure you this is true,
 For I have found it answer—so may you.

XIV

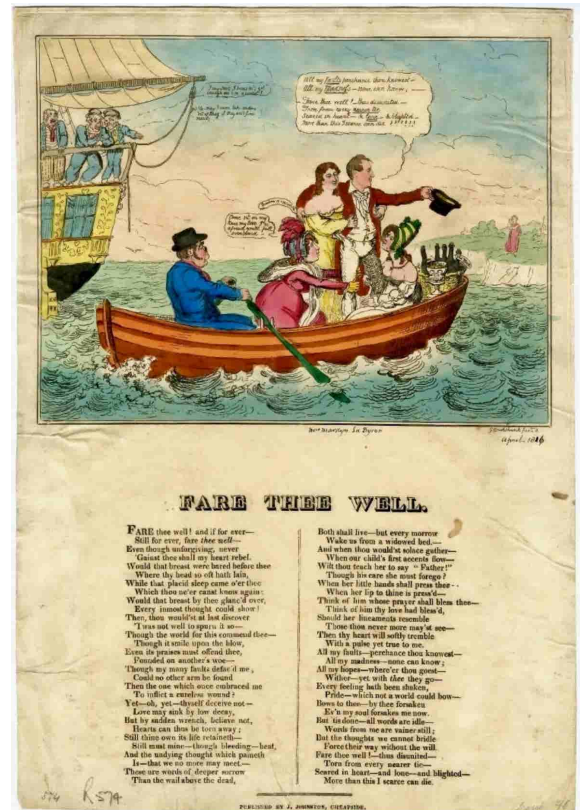
Don Juan stood and gazing from the stern,
 Beheld his native Spain receding far.
 First partings form a lesson hard to learn;
 Even nations feel this when they go to war.
 There is a sort of unexpressed concern,
 A kind of shock that sets one's heart ajar.
 At leaving even the most unpleasant people
 And places, one keeps looking at the steeple.

XV

But Juan had got many things to leave,
 His mother and a mistress and no wife,
 So that he had much better cause to grieve
 Than many persons more advanced in life.
 And if we now and then a sigh must heave
 At quitting even those we quit in strife,
 No doubt we weep for those the heart endears,
 That is, till deeper griefs congeal our tears.

XVI

So Juan wept, as wept the captive Jews
 By Babel's waters, still remembering Sion.
 I'd weep, but mine is not a weeping Muse,
 And such light griefs are not a thing to die on.
 Young men should travel, if but to amuse
 Themselves; and the next time their servants tie on
 Behind their carriages their new portmanteau,
 Perhaps it may be lined with this my canto.



BEWILDERED ON THE DECK ✎ The radical press mercilessly lampooned Byron's own flight from England on 25 April, 1816. In this contemporary broadsheet a slanderous Cruickshank cartoon, depicts Byron boarding the boat for Antwerp with three courtesans ("fake news!"). It is set above B.'s pathetic lyric *Fare Thee Well* that he wrote a couple of weeks earlier in an attempt to apologize, or explain his behaviour, to Annabelle. Just days later he signed the formal deed of separation. The letter to his wife, enclosing the poem, read:
"Dearest Bell — I send you the first verses that ever I attempted to write upon you, and perhaps the last that I may ever write at all. This at such a moment may look like affectation, but it is not so. The language of all nations nearest to a state of nature is said to be Poetry. I know not how this may be; but this I know. You know that the lover, the lunatic, and the poet are "of imagination all compact." I am afraid you have hitherto seen me only as the two first, but I would fain hope there is nothing in the last to add to grievances you may have against the former."

THE CAPTIVE JEWS ✧ The [second quote](#) from Psalm 137 in this Canto: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."

LINED WITH THIS MY CANTO ✧ A standard comic trope mocking literary fame: an author's books cut up and used for lining trunks and pie-tins.

XVII

And Juan wept and much he sighed and thought,
 While his salt tears dropped into the salt sea.
 'Sweets to the sweet' (I like so much to quote,
 You must excuse this extract; 'tis where she,
 The Queen of Denmark, for Ophelia brought
 Flowers to the grave). And sobbing often, he
 Reflected on his present situation
 And seriously resolved on reformation.

QUOTE ✧ From *Hamlet*, V.i. A nonsense quote, of course, given the previous line.

XVIII

'Farewell, my Spain, a long farewell!' he cried,
 'Perhaps I may revisit thee no more,
 But die, as many an exiled heart hath died,
 Of its own thirst to see again thy shore.
 Farewell, where Guadalquivir's waters glide.
 Farewell, my mother, and since all is o'er,
 Farewell too, dearest Julia!' Here he drew
 Her letter out again and read it through.

A LONG FAREWELL ✧ So begins one of Juan's longest speeches in the entire poem: poppycock from the poop deck, that B. counterpoints with bathetic detail.

XIX

'And oh, if e'er I should forget, I swear -
 But that's impossible and cannot be.
 Sooner shall this blue ocean melt to air,
 Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea
 Than I resign thine image, oh my fair!
 Or think of anything excepting thee.
 A mind diseased no remedy can physic.'
 (Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew seasick.)

XX

'Sooner shall heaven kiss earth' (here he fell sicker) -
 'Oh Julia, what is every other woe?
 (For God's sake let me have a glass of liquor,
 Pedro, Battista, help me down below.)
 Julia, my love (you rascal, Pedro, quicker),
 Oh Julia (this curst vessel pitches so),
 Belovéd Julia, hear me still beseeching!'
 (Here he grew inarticulate with retching.)

XXI

He felt that chilling heaviness of heart,
 Or rather stomach, which alas, attends,
 Beyond the best apothecary's art,
 The loss of love, the treachery of friends,
 Or death of those we dote on, when a part
 Of us dies with them as each fond hope ends.
 No doubt he would have been much more pathetic,
 But the sea acted as a strong emetic.

XXII

Love's a capricious power. I've known it hold
 Out through a fever caused by its own heat,
 But be much puzzled by a cough and cold
 And find a quinsy very hard to treat.
 Against all noble maladies he's bold,
 But vulgar illnesses don't like to meet,
 Nor that a sneeze should interrupt his sigh,
 Nor inflammations redden his blind eye.

A QUINSY ✧ An inflammation of the throat; tonsilitis.

XXIII

But worst of all is nausea or a pain
 About the lower region of the bowels.
 Love, who heroically breathes a vein,
 Shrinks from the application of hot towels,
 And purgatives are dangerous to his reign,
 Seasickness death. His love was perfect; how else
 Could Juan's passion, while the billows roar,
 Resist his stomach, ne'er at sea before?

BREATHES A VEIN ✧ Not a medical treatment, but a lover's suicide.

SEASICKNESS DEATH ✎ B. could be very funny about *mal-de-mer*. On the point of boarding the Lisbon Packet at the start of his Grand Tour in 1809, he dashed off a brilliant verse on sea-sickness to Francis Hodgson, his Cambridge tutor, that was collected by Marchant with B.'s letters and journals. Here's an excerpt:

*Fletcher, Murray, Bob, where are you?
Stretched along the deck like logs
Bear a hand—you jolly tar you!
Here's a rope's end for the dogs,
Hobhouse muttering fearful curses*

*As the hatchway down he rolls
Now his breakfast, now his verses
Vomits forth & damns our souls,
Here's a stanza
On Braganza
Help!—a couplet—no, a cup
Of warm water;
What's the matter?
Zounds! my liver's coming up,
I shall not survive the racket
Of this brutal Lisbon Packet. . .*

XXIV

The ship, called the most holy Trinidad,
Was steering duly for the port Leghorn,
For there the Spanish family Moncada
Were settled long ere Juan's sire was born.
They were relations, and for them he had a
Letter of introduction, which the morn
Of his departure had been sent him by
His Spanish friends for those in Italy.

XXV

His suite consisted of three servants and
A tutor, the licentiate Pedrillo,
Who several languages did understand,
But now lay sick and speechless on his pillow,
And rocking in his hammock, longed for land,
His headache being increased by every billow.
And the waves oozing through the porthole made
His berth a little damp, and him afraid.


TRINIDAD ✧ The holy Trinity. B. crams the scenery for his drama with symbols of religious piety, the better to contrast the depravity to come. His critics called it "blasphemy", of course.

LEGHORN ✧ The Italian port of Livorno, more than 900 nautical miles from Cadiz: probably a 3 week voyage.

LICENTIATE ✧ Lit. someone with a graduate qualification, but in this case someone with a license to preach but no ecclesiastical appointment. *PC* speculates that B. may have had his own travelling companion, Cam Hobhouse, in mind when he drew the portrait of Pedrillo.

☞ 'Twas not without some reason. . .

XXVI

 11'28"

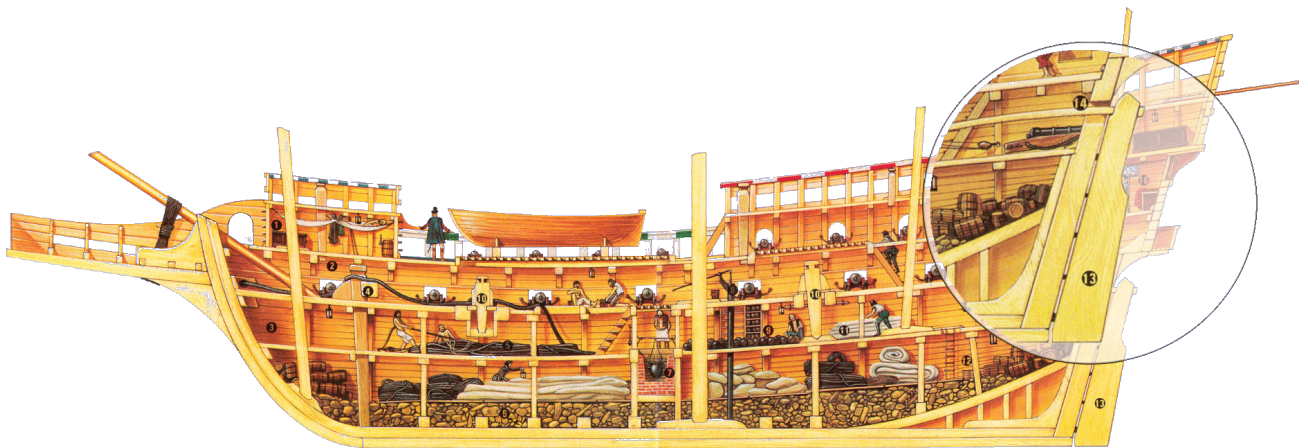
'Twas not without some reason, for the wind
 Increased at night until it blew a gale;
 And though 'twas not much to a naval mind,
 Some landsmen would have looked a little pale,
 For sailors are in fact a different kind.
 At sunset they began to take in sail,
 For the sky showed it would come on to blow
 And carry away perhaps a mast or so.

XXVII

At one o'clock the wind with sudden shift
 Threw the ship right into the trough of the sea,
 Which struck her aft and made an awkward rift,
 Started the sternpost, also shattered the
 Whole of her stern-frame, and ere she could lift
 Herself from out her present jeopardy
 The rudder tore away."Twas time to sound
 The pumps, and there were four feet water found.

SOURCES ✦ **PC** has traced much of the following account of the wreck of the *Trinidad* to almost direct quotations, cleverly integrated, from a number of books on shipwrecks — especially *Shipwrecks and Disasters at Sea*, by Sir John Dalyell (1812), which provides much of the text used in verses XXIII to XXXII. B. also consulted books by the notorious Capt. William Bligh (of *The Bounty*) and an autobiography of B.'s grandfather, [Admiral Hon. John Byron](#), known as "Foul Weather Jack". B. acknowledged his borrowings to Murray, claiming "no writer ever borrowed less. . . or made his material more his own." Dayell's account of the loss of the ship *Hercules* in 1796 reads, in part: "Night came on worse than the day had been, and a sudden shift of wind, about midnight, threw the ship into the trough of the sea, which struck her aft, tore away the rudder, started the stern-post, and shattered the whole of her stern frame. The pumps were immediately sounded, and, in the course of a few minutes the water had increased to four feet."

☞ One gang of people. . .



STARTED THE STERNPOST ☞ This is a cut-away drawing of an 18th century Spanish caravel: a war-ship but a design similar to that described by Byron. The *stern-post* is the large structural member to which the rudder — see the *inset* — is attached. The *stern-frame* comprises all those parts to which it is attached including the keel, at its base, and the transom at its top. If a sea knocked the stern-post from its mounts it would seriously damage the integrity of the hull . . . as well as making it almost impossible to steer the ship or to *heave-to*: that is, to set the rudder and reefed-sails in opposition so that the ship could ride-out stormy seas.

XXVIII

One gang of people instantly was put
 Upon the pumps and the remainder set
 To get up part of the cargo and what not,
 But they could not come at the leak as yet.
 At last they did get at it really, but
 Still their salvation was an even bet.
 The water rushed through in a way quite puzzling,
 While they thrust sheets, shirts, jackets, bales of muslin

XXIX

Into the opening, but all such ingredients
 Would have been vain, and they must have gone down,
 Despite of all their efforts and expedients,
 But for the pumps. I'm glad to make them known
 To all the brother tars who may have need hence,
 For fifty tons of water were upthrown
 By them per hour, and they had all been undone
 But for the maker, Mr Mann, of London.

XXX

As day advanced the weather seemed to abate,
 And then the leak they reckoned to reduce
 And keep the ship afloat, though three feet yet
 Kept two hand and one chain pump still in use.
 The wind blew fresh again; as it grew late

A squall came on, and while some guns broke loose,
 A gust, which all descriptive power transcends,
 Laid with one blast the ship on her beam ends.

XXXI

There she lay, motionless, and seemed upset.
 The water left the hold and washed the decks
 And made a scene men do not soon forget,
 For they remember battles, fires, and wrecks,
 Or any other thing that brings regret
 Or breaks their hopes or hearts or heads or necks.
 Thus drownings are much talked of by the divers
 And swimmers who may chance to be survivors.

SOURCE ✧ Sir John Dayell continues. . . : “One gang was instantly put on them, and the remainder of the people employed in getting up rice from the run of the ship, and heaving it over, to come to the leak if possible. After three or four hundred bags were thrown into the sea, we did get at it, and found the water rushing into the ship with astonishing rapidity; therefore we thrust sheets, shirts, jackets, bales of muslin, and everything of the like description that could be got, into the opening. Notwithstanding the pumps discharged fifty tons of water an hour, the ship must certainly have gone down had not our expedients been attended with some success. The pumps, to the excellent construction of which I owe the preservation of my life, were made by Mr. Mann of London”. It seems B. hit on the word “muslin” that he had once before rhymed with “puzzling” when describing Inez’ costume in [Canto I](#)



HON. JOHN BYRON ✧ *Foul-weather Jack* — B.’s grandfather — painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The family resemblance is evident.

ON HER BEAM ENDS ✧ A *beam* is an obsolete word for a tree or mast. This expression means the ship was knocked on its side, masts touching the water. The weight of the loose guns, rolling across the deck, would have helped the tilt against the weight of the ballast and any sail set would collect water and stop the ship from righting.

Sir John Dayell’s account of the loss of the *Hercules* reads: “Scarce was this done, when a gust, exceeding in violence every thing of the kind I had ever seen, or could conceive, laid the ship on her beam-ends. The water forsook the hold and appeared between decks, so as to fill the men’s hammocks to leeward, the ship lay motionless, and, to all appearance, irrevocably overset”

XXXII

Immediately the masts were cut away,
 Both main and mizen. First the mizen went,
 The mainmast followed, but the ship still lay
 Like a mere log and baffled our intent.
Foremast and bowsprit were cut down, and they
 Eased her at last (although we never meant
 To part with all till every hope was blighted),
 And then with violence the old ship righted.

XXXIII

It may be easily supposed, while this
 Was going on, some people were unquiet,
 That passengers would find it much amiss
 To lose their lives as well as spoil their diet,
 That even the able seaman, deeming his
 Days nearly o'er, might be disposed to riot,
 As upon such occasions tars will ask
 For grog and sometimes drink rum from the cask.

XXXIV

There's nought no doubt so much the spirit calms
 As rum and true religion; thus it was,
 Some plundered, some drank spirits, some sung psalms.
 The high wind made the treble, and as bass
 The hoarse harsh waves kept time. Fright cured the qualms
 Of all the luckless landsmen's seasick maws.
 Strange sounds of wailing, blasphemy, devotion
 Clamoured in chorus to the roaring ocean.

XXXV

Perhaps more mischief had been done, but for
 Our Juan, who with sense beyond his years,
 Got to the spirit-room and stood before
 It with a pair of pistols. And their fears,
 As if Death were more dreadful by his door
 Of fire than water, spite of oaths and tears,
 Kept still aloof the crew, who ere they sunk,
 Thought it would be becoming to die drunk.

MAIN AND MIZEN ✧ In the image, above, of a caravel, the mizzen is the mast closest to the stern. The main mast is the mast in the centre of the ship, immediately in front of the mizzen.

OUR INTENT ✧ **PC** notes that the word “our” was a deliberate replacement of the original “their” in the manuscript. He thinks B. was seeking an effect by confusing perspectives. Or, perhaps it was a mistake.

FOREMAST AND BOWSPRIT ✧ The remaining masts. Presumably, the ship righted once there was no more wet sail holding it down in the water.

RUM AND TRUE RELIGION ✧ An epithet for the ages. “Don’t talk to me about naval tradition”, said Churchill, “It’s nothing but rum, sodomy, and the lash!”. A still later version has it as: “Rum, bum and phonograph records”. Hobhouse attempted to replace the phrase in the manuscript but B. restored it with an exclamation “Bah!”

MAWS ✧ Bellies, usually of animals.

GOT TO THE SPIRIT-ROOM ✧ “A midshipman was appointed to guard the spirit-room, to repress that unhappy desire of a devoted crew to die in a state of intoxication. The sailors, though, in other respects orderly in conduct, here pressed eagerly upon him. “Give us some grog,” they exclaimed, “it will be all one an hour hence.” “I know we must die,” replied the gallant officer; coolly, “but let us die like men;” armed with a brace of pistols, he kept his post, even while the ship was sinking”: Sir John Dayell on the loss of the *Earl of Abergavenny*, quoted in **PC**

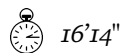
XXXVI

'Give us more grog,' they cried, 'for it will be
 All one an hour hence.' Juan answered, 'No!
 'Tis true that death awaits both you and me,
 But let us die like men, not sink below
 Like brutes.' And thus his dangerous post kept he,
 And none liked to anticipate the blow,
 And even Pedrillo, his most reverend tutor,
 Was for some rum a disappointed suitor.

XXXVII

The good old gentleman was quite aghast
 And made a loud and pious lamentation,
 Repented all his sins, and made a last
 Irrevocable vow of reformation:
 Nothing should tempt him more (this peril past)
 To quit his academic occupation
 In cloisters of the classic Salamanca,
 To follow Juan's wake like Sancho Panca.

XXXVIII



But now there came a flash of hope once more;
 Day broke, and the wind lulled. The masts were gone,
 The leak increased, shoals round her, but no shore;
 The vessel swam, yet still she held her own.
 They tried the pumps again, and though before
 Their desperate efforts seemed all useless grown,
 A glimpse of sunshine set some hands to bale;
 The stronger pumped, the weaker thrummed a sail.

XXXIX

Under the vessel's keel the sail was past,
 And for the moment it had some effect;
 But with a leak and not a stick of mast
 Nor rag of canvas, what could they expect?
 But still'tis best to struggle to the last,
 'Tis never too late to be wholly wrecked.
 And though'tis true that man can only die once,
 'Tis not so pleasant in the Gulf of Lyons.

SANCHO PANCA ✧ i.e. *Sancho Panaza*, Don Quixote's squire. In the tradition of the Grand Tour, the young noble traveller was usually accompanied by a chaperone known, jokingly, as a "bear-leader" (someone who manages an unruly animal). Pedrillo is too well-educated to be a Sancho Panza and too weak-willed to be a bear-leader.

THRUMMED A SAIL ✧ A *thrum* is scrap of rope end or thread. Sailors reinforced the fabric by of a sail by threading pieces of hemp rope through it. The idea was to prevent the sail chafing or tearing on the barnacles adhering to the hull and to make it swell to fill a leak.

GULF OF LYONS ✧ Now normally written as the *Gulf of Lion*, this is a large bay that extends around the northern shore of the Mediterranean from the Spanish border to Marseille and Toulon. Sailors know it for the tempestuous weather caused by two cold northerly winds that sweep into the Bay: the *Mistral* and *Tramontane*. The winds have similar origins: a steep difference in atmospheric pressures between the Atlantic and northwest of Europe (high pressures) and the Gulf of Lion (low pressures). The winds gather speed and force travelling south, by different routes, funnelled by the Pyrenees and the Massif Central of France (the *Tramontane*) or the Massif Central and the Alps (the *Mistral*). The *Trinidad* has by this time travelled almost half way to its destination.

XL

There winds and waves had hurled them, and from thence
 Without their will they carried them away,
 For they were forced with steering to dispense,
 And never had as yet a quiet day
 On which they might repose, or even commence
 A jury mast or rudder, or could say
 The ship would swim an hour, which by good luck
 Still swam—though not exactly like a duck.

A JURY MAST ✧ A jury mast (or rudder) is one tricked from other materials, such as a spar or an oar, to serve a temporary use, such as when the real thing breaks. The word may derive from the Old French word *ajurie*, meaning “help”.

XLI

The wind in fact perhaps was rather less,
 But the ship laboured so, they scarce could hope
 To weather out much longer. The distress
 Was also great with which they had to cope
 For want of water, and their solid mess
 Was scant enough. In vain the telescope
 Was used; nor sail nor shore appeared in sight,
 Nought but the heavy sea and coming night.

XLII

Again the weather threatened, again blew
 A gale, and in the fore and after hold
 Water appeared; yet though the people knew
 All this, the most were patient, and some bold,
 Until the chains and leathers were worn through
 Of all our pumps. A wreck complete she rolled
 At mercy of the waves, whose mercies are
 Like human beings during civil war.

SOURCES ✧ Most of this detail is taken, again, from Sir John Dayell; perhaps the reason B. slips from a third-person account to a first person pronoun “our”.

CHAINS AND LEATHERS ✧ Not as *punk* as it may sound. A chain pump comprised a chain set with flat disks every few links that ran through a pair of tubes of the same internal diameter as the disks. The pumps were immersed in the ship’s bilge and operated by turning a wheel at the top of the pump to draw the water up. The British Admiralty specified chain pumps on its warships from the middle of the 18th century. Once the pumps failed, the ship would be in dire trouble.

XLIII

Then came the carpenter, at last, with tears
 In his rough eyes and told the captain he
 Could do no more. He was a man in years
 And long had voyaged through many a stormy sea,
 And if he wept at length, they were not fears
 That made his eyelids as a woman’s be,
 But he, poor fellow, had a wife and children,
 Two things for dying people quite bewildering.

HE COULD DO NO MORE ✧ The ships’ carpenter was in charge of temporarily plugging and then repairing the breech in the hull; also rigging jury-masts.

XLIV

The ship was evidently settling now
 Fast by the head; and all distinction gone,
 Some went to prayers again and made a vow
 Of candles to their saints, but there were none
 To pay them with; and some looked o'er the bow;
 Some hoisted out the boats; and there was one
 That begged Pedrillo for an absolution,
 Who told him to be damned—in his confusion.

HEAD ✧ The ship was sinking *pro*w-first. The sailors latrines, called the “heads”, were usually located at the prow, just below the level of the main deck. See the unmarked open area below the bowsprit in the illustration of the [caravel](#).

XLV

Some lashed them in their hammocks; some put on
 Their best clothes, as if going to a fair;
 Some cursed the day on which they saw the sun
 And gnashed their teeth and howling tore their hair;
 And others went on as they had begun,
 Getting the boats out, being well aware
 That a tight boat will live in a rough sea,
 Unless with breakers close beneath her lee.

LASHED...BEST CLOTHES ✧ More details from Dayell.

XLVI

The worst of all was that in their condition,
 Having been several days in great distress,
 'Twas difficult to get out such provision
 As now might render their long suffering less.
 Men, even when dying, dislike inanition.
 Their stock was damaged by the weather's stress;
 Two casks of biscuit and a keg of butter
 Were all that could be thrown into the cutter.

LEE ✧ The side of a boat opposite to the windward — or luff — side. A boat that is being blown into the breakers on her leeward side is likely to be swamped.

XLVII

But in the longboat they contrived to stow
 Some pounds of bread, though injured by the wet;
 Water, a twenty gallon cask or so;
 Six flasks of wine. And they contrived to get
 A portion of their beef up from below,
 And with a piece of pork moreover met,
 But scarce enough to serve them for a luncheon;
 Then there was rum, eight gallons in a puncheon.

XLVIII

The other boats, the yawl and pinnace, had
 Been stove in the beginning of the gale;
 And the longboat's condition was but bad,
 As there were but two blankets for a sail
 And one oar for a mast, which a young lad
 Threw in by good luck over the ship's rail.
 And two boats could not hold, far less be stored,
 To save one half the people then on board.

STORED ⇨ provisioned.


XLIX

'Twas twilight and the sunless day went down
 Over the waste of waters. Like a veil,
 Which if withdrawn would but disclose the frown
 Of one whose hate is masked but to assail,
 Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown
 And grimly darkled o'er their faces pale
 And the dim desolate deep. Twelve days had Fear
 Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

L

Some trial had been making at a raft
 With little hope in such a rolling sea,
 A sort of thing at which one would have laughed,
 If any laughter at such times could be,
 Unless with people who too much have quaffed
 And have a kind of wild and horrid glee,
 Half epileptical and half hysterical.
 Their preservation would have been a miracle.

LI

 21'34"

At half past eight o'clock, booms, hencoops, spars
 And all things for a chance had been cast loose,
 That still could keep afloat the struggling tars,
 For yet they strove, although of no great use.
 There was no light in heaven but a few stars,
 The boats put off o'ercrowded with their crews.
 She gave a heel and then a lurch to port,
 And going down head foremost—sunk, in short.

LII

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell,
 Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave,
 Then some leaped overboard with dreadful yell,
 As eager to anticipate their grave.
 And the sea yawned around her like a hell,
 And down she sucked with her the whirling wave,
 Like one who grapples with his enemy
 And strives to strangle him before he die.

LIII

And first one universal shriek there rushed,
 Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
 Of echoing thunder, and then all was hushed,
 Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
 Of billows; but at intervals there gushed,
 Accompanied with a convulsive splash,
 A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
 Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

LIV

The boats, as stated, had got off before,
 And in them crowded several of the crew.
 And yet their present hope was hardly more
 Than what it had been, for so strong it blew
 There was slight chance of reaching any shore.
 And then they were too many, though so few,
 Nine in the cutter, thirty in the boat
 Were counted in them when they got afloat.

LV

All the rest perished; near two hundred souls
 Had left their bodies. And what's worse, alas,
 When over Catholics the ocean rolls,
 They must wait several weeks before a mass
 Takes off one peck of purgatorial coals,
 Because, till people know what's come to pass,
 They won't lay out their money on the dead.
 It costs three francs for every mass that's said.

THE BOATS, AS STATED ✧ Not quite. B. has so far mentioned a yawl and pinnace and a longboat. The first two are small two-masted sail-or-row boats that were “stove” i.e. holed and so unable to carry crew, leaving only the longboat. But later in this verse B. also mentions a cutter — another two-masted style of small sail boat — that briefly holds nine survivors.

WHEN OVER CATHOLICS ✧ A cheap shot, but a funny one. In Catholic tradition there could be no *Requiem* Mass said without the presence of a body. Instead there would be a *Memorial* Mass for which some (unspecified) stipend would usually be offered to the priest. The Memorial would necessarily omit the ceremony of the *Absolution of the Dead*, performed over the coffin after the Requiem Mass, that was intended as a plea for release of the soul of the departed from Purgatory, where minor infractions were proportionately punished by, you know...burning with hot coals.

LVI

Juan got into the longboat and there
 Contrived to help Pedrillo to a place.
 It seemed as if they had exchanged their care,
 For Juan wore the magisterial face
 Which courage gives, while poor Pedrillo's pair
 Of eyes were crying for their owner's case.
 Battista, though (a name called shortly Tita),
 Was lost by getting at some aqua vita.

LVII

Pedro, his valet, too he tried to save,
 But the same cause, conducive to his loss,
 Left him so drunk he jumped into the wave
 As o'er the cutter's edge he tried to cross,
 And so he found a wine-and-watery grave.
 They could not rescue him although so close,
 Because the sea ran higher every minute,
 And for the boat—the crew kept crowding in it.

LVIII

A small old spaniel, which had been Don José's,
 His father's, whom he loved as ye may think
 (For on such things the memory reposes
 With tenderness), stood howling on the brink,
 Knowing (dogs have such intellectual noses),
 No doubt the vessel was about to sink.
 And Juan caught him up and ere he stepped
 Off threw him in, then after him he leaped.

LIX

He also stuffed his money where he could
 About his person and Pedrillo's too,
 Who let him do in fact whate'er he would,
 Not knowing what himself to say or do,
 As every rising wave his dread renewed.
 But Juan, trusting they might still get through
 And deeming there were remedies for any ill,
 Thus re-embarked his tutor and his spaniel.

TITA ✧ The name of B.'s gondolier — as he drafted this Canto — the leonine Giovanni Battista Falcieri. Tita was a favorite with B., who kept him on as a bodyguard and messenger until the end in Missolonghi. Tita accompanied B.'s body back to England where he finally settled, for a while as a servant in the Disraeli family.

AQUA VITA ✧ Distilled spirits, probably brandy.

WINE-AND-WATERY GRAVE ✧ Wine and water is the mix used in the Catholic sacrament of the eucharist. B. is warming to his topic; the blasphemous eucharist to come.

LX

'Twas a rough night and blew so stiffly yet
 That the sail was becalmed between the seas,
 Though on the wave's high top too much to set,
 They dared not take it in for all the breeze.
 Each sea curled o'er the stern and kept them wet
 And made them bail without a moment's ease,
 So that themselves as well as hopes were damped,
 And the poor little cutter quickly swamped.


LXI

Nine souls more went in her. The longboat still
 Kept above water, with an oar for mast.
 Two blankets stitched together, answering ill
 Instead of sail, were to the oar made fast.
 Though every wave rolled menacing to fill,
 And present peril all before surpassed,
 They grieved for those who perished with the cutter,
 And also for the biscuit casks and butter.

LXII

The sun rose red and fiery, a sure sign
 Of the continuance of the gale. To run
 Before the sea until it should grow fine
 Was all that for the present could be done.
 A few teaspoonfuls of their rum and wine
 Were served out to the people, who begun
 To faint, and damaged bread wet through the bags.
 And most of them had little clothes but rags.

LXIII

 26'23"

They counted thirty, crowded in a space
 Which left scarce room for motion or exertion.
 They did their best to modify their case;
 One half sate up, though numbed with the immersion
 While t'other half were laid down in their place,
 At watch and watch. Thus, shivering like the tertian
Ague in its cold fit, they filled their boat,
 With nothing but the sky for a greatcoat.



SOURCES ✍ This stanza, and the account of the sail loosing wind between the high waves, is taken almost directly from William Bligh's account of his run to Timor — almost 7,000 kms — in an open boat after being set adrift by the Bounty mutineers. Bligh, seen here in a miniature by Alexander Huey, was a great navigator and cartographer who, however, had an uncompromising attitude, bad temper and a tyrannical leadership style.

SUN ROSE RED AND FIERY ✧ This stanza, too, relies directly on Capt. Bligh's account.

THE TERTIAN AGUE ✧ A fever recurring every other day. A tertian ague was usually malaria

LXIV

'Tis very certain the desire of life
 Prolongs it; this is obvious to physicians,
 When patients, neither plagued with friends nor wife,
 Survive through very desperate conditions,
 Because they still can hope, nor shines the knife
 Nor shears of Atropos before their visions.
 Despair of all recovery spoils longevity,
 And makes men's miseries of alarming brevity.

LXV

'Tis said that persons living on annuities
 Are longer lived than others, God knows why,
 Unless to plague the grantors; yet so true it is,
 That some, I really think, do never die.
 Of any creditors the worst a Jew it is,
 And that's their mode of furnishing supply.
 In my young days they lent me cash that way,
 Which I found very troublesome to pay.

LXVI

'Tis thus with people in an open boat;
 They live upon the love of life and bear
 More than can be believed or even thought,
 And stand like rocks the tempest's wear and tear.
 And hardship still has been the sailor's lot,
 Since Noah's ark went cruising here and there.
 She had a curious crew as well as cargo,
 Like the first old Greek privateer, the Argo.

LXVII

But man is a carnivorous production
 And must have meals, at least one meal a day.
 He cannot live like woodcocks upon suction,
 But like the shark and tiger must have prey.
 Although his anatomical construction
 Bears vegetables in a grumbling way,
 Your labouring people think beyond all question,
 Beef, veal, and mutton better for digestion.



ATROPOS ✎ Bernardo Strozzi's 17th century painting of the Three Fates (Moirai). In the Greek tradition, the sisters were Clotho, who spun the thread, Lachesis, who measured it out and Atropos, the eldest, who cut the thread of life.

OF ANY CREDITORS ✧ B. means, possibly, that money-lenders' clients are kept alive by the necessity of paying their debts. B. was heavily in debt to London money-lenders, conventionally called Jews, for much of his life after extravagant living in Cambridge and London. He set off on his Grand Tour in 1809 — funded by a £5,000 loan from his friend Scrope Davies — with debts to the money-lenders amounting to £30,000. He finally quit these debts only after selling Newstead Abbey in 1818.

NOAH'S ARK ✧ A second reference to the story from *Genesis*. Invoking Biblical and mythic sources in the same jokey tone no doubt scandalised some of B's readers, probably as he intended.

THE ARGO ✧ The ship that, according to legend, Jason and his Argonauts sailed into the Black Sea in search of the Golden Fleece. In a kind of *prequel* for the Homeric epics of the Trojan war — the Argo's adventure takes place ten years before the war — the "curious crew" comprised *cameo* parts for many of the big-names in the mythic franchise. Among them were Atalanta, the virgin huntress; Asclepius the patron of medicine; the musician Orpheus; Hercules, and; the fathers of the heroes of the Trojan war: Achilles (Peleus), Odysseus (Laertes) and Ajax (Telemon).

WOODCOCKS ✧ A game bird that lives mostly on earthworms. Its bill has a flexible tip to grip the worm as it emerges from its burrow, so that that the Woodcock appears to suck them up from the ground.

VEGETABLES ✧ *PC* notes that B. subsisted for long periods on a vegetarian diet in his chronic attempts to control his weight.

LXVIII

And thus it was with this our hapless crew,
 For on the third day there came on a calm,
 And though at first their strength it might renew,
 And lying on their weariness like balm,
 Lulled them like turtles sleeping on the blue
 Of ocean, when they woke they felt a qualm
 And fell all ravenously on their provision,
 Instead of hoarding it with due precision.

LXIX

The consequence was easily foreseen:
 They ate up all they had and drank their wine
 In spite of all remonstrances, and then
 On what in fact next day were they to dine?
 They hoped the wind would rise, these foolish men,
 And carry them to shore. These hopes were fine,
 But as they had but one oar, and that brittle,
 It would have been more wise to save their victual.

LXX

The fourth day came, but not a breath of air,
 And ocean slumbered like an unweaned child.
 The fifth day, and their boat lay floating there,
 The sea and sky were blue and clear and mild.
 With their one oar (I wish they had had a pair)
 What could they do? And hunger's rage grew wild,
 So Juan's spaniel, spite of his entreating,
 Was killed and portioned out for present eating.

LXXI

On the sixth day they fed upon his hide,
 And Juan, who had still refused, because
 The creature was his father's dog that died,
 Now feeling all the vulture in his jaws,
 With some remorse received (though first denied)
 As a great favour one of the forepaws,
 Which he divided with Pedrillo, who
 Devoured it, longing for the other too.

ONE OF THE FOREPAWS ✦ B. takes this delectable detail from his grandfather's account of being marooned, as a young midshipman, after the wreck of *HMS Wager* off the coast of Southern Chile. Foul-weather Jack, too, dined on the hide and forepaws of his own dog.

LXXII

The seventh day and no wind. The burning sun
 Blistered and scorched, and stagnant on the sea
 They lay like carcasses, and hope was none,
 Save in the breeze that came not. Savagely
 They glared upon each other. All was done,
 Water and wine and food, and you might see
 The longings of the cannibal arise
 (Although they spoke not) in their wolfish eyes.

LXXIII

At length one whispered his companion, who
 Whispered another, and thus it went round,
 And then into a hoarser murmur grew,
 An ominous and wild and desperate sound,
 And when his comrade's thought each sufferer knew,
 'Twas but his own, suppressed till now, he found.
 And out they spoke of lots for flesh and blood,
 And who should die to be his fellow's food.

LXXIV

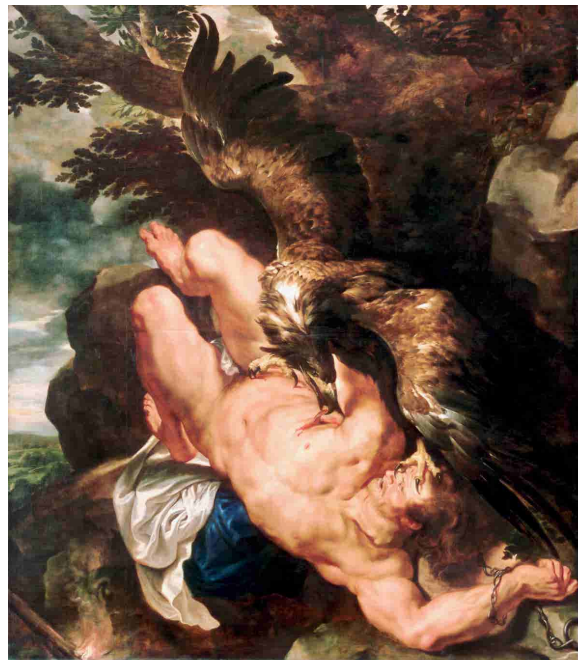
But ere they came to this, they that day shared
 Some leathern caps and what remained of shoes;
 And then they looked around them and despaired,
 And none to be the sacrifice would choose.
 At length the lots were torn up and prepared,
 But of materials that much shock the Muse.
 Having no paper, for the want of better,
 They took by force from Juan Julia's letter.

LXXV

The lots were made and marked and mixed and handed
 In silent horror, and their distribution
 Lulled even the savage hunger which demanded,
 Like the Promethean vulture, this pollution.
 None in particular had sought or planned it;
 'Twas nature gnawed them to this resolution,
 By which none were permitted to be neuter,
 And the lot fell on Juan's luckless tutor.

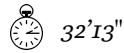
LONGINGS OF THE CANNIBAL ✦ A gothic notion that cannibalism is a kind of uncontrolled animal lust. *PC* shows that Byron borrowed many details for the cannibalism episode from Dayell's account of six men who deserted the Artillery on the island of St Helena. John Byron's *Narrative* also recalls his stranded shipmates considering a murder for the purpose of cannibalism: "*that dreadful and last resort of men. . .*"

JULIA'S LETTER ✦ *Sic transit amor*: this is the last we hear of Julia: her touching farewell shredded in the service of cannibals. No wonder the *Muse* is shocked.



PROMETHEUS ✦ Byron refers several times in *Don Juan* to the myth of the Titan Prometheus who stole fire — the source of metal-working and science — from the smithy of Hephaistos on Mt Olympus and gave it to man against the wishes of the Gods. Zeus punished him eternally by chaining him, exposed, on Mt. Caucasus where by day an eagle — or perhaps a vulture — fed on his liver that regrew every night. B. is less interested here in the divine defiance of Prometheus than in a powerful image of "savage hunger" as a vulture tearing at the guts. The painting is by Peter Paul Rubens whose fleshiness B. did not admire so much.

LXXVI



He but requested to be bled to death.
 The surgeon had his instruments and bled
 Pedrillo, and so gently ebbd his breath
 You hardly could perceive when he was dead.
 He died as born, a Catholic in faith,
 Like most in the belief in which they're bred,
 And first a little crucifix he kissed,
 And then held out his jugular and wrist

A LITTLE CRUCIFIX HE KISSED ✧ B. intends us to see this as a religious ceremony; Pedrillo going meekly to the slaughter.

LXXVII

The surgeon, as there was no other fee,
 Had his first choice of morsels for his pains,
 But being thirstiest at the moment, he
 Preferred a draught from the fast-flowing veins.
 Part was divided, part thrown in the sea,
 And such things as the entrails and the brains
 Regaled two sharks who followed o'er the billow.
 The sailors ate the rest of poor Pedrillo.

PEDRILLO ✧ B. continues to ignore the Spanish pronunciation; it gives him a trite rhyme that contrasts and comically enhances the horror.

LXXVIII

The sailors ate him, all save three or four,
 Who were not quite so fond of animal food.
 To these was added Juan, who, before
 Refusing his own spaniel, hardly could
 Feel now his appetite increased much more.
 'Twas not to be expected that he should,
 Even in extremity of their disaster,
 Dine with them on his pastor and his master.

HIS PASTOR AND HIS MASTER ✧ B.'s explanation of Juan's still greater reluctance to eat his ordained tutor than to eat his dog, allows him, tacitly, to recall the eucharist that celebrates Christ's instructions to his Disciples to dine on the body of their *pastor* (lit. shepherd) and Master.

LXXIX

'Twas better that he did not, for in fact
 The consequence was awful in the extreme.
 For they who were most ravenous in the act
 Went raging mad. Lord! how they did blaspheme
 And foam and roll, with strange convulsions racked,
 Drinking salt water like a mountain stream,
 Tearing and grinning, howling, screeching, swearing,
 And with hyena laughter died despairing.

AWFUL IN THE EXTREME ✧ The gothic horror mounts. B. has the authority of his sources for these lurid consequences of *abomination*; but it's completely fanciful. Drinking sea-water is decidedly foolish. Sea-water is about 3 percent salt but the human kidneys can excrete excess salt in the urine only at a concentration of about 2 percent. The tissues of the body must surrender any stored water to allow this dilution to happen. So drinking sea-water de-hydrates rather than re-hydrates.

LXXX

Their numbers were much thinned by this infliction,
 And all the rest were *thin enough*, heaven knows,
 And some of them had lost their recollection,
 Happier than they who still perceived their woes,
 But others pondered on a new dissection,
 As if not warned sufficiently by those
 Who had already perished, suffering madly,
 For having used their appetites so sadly.

LXXXI

And next they thought upon the master's mate
 As fattest, but he saved himself, because,
 Besides being much averse from such a fate,
 There were some other reasons: the first was
 He had been rather indisposed of late,
 And that which chiefly proved his saving clause
 Was a small present made to him at Cadiz,
 By general subscription of the ladies.

LXXXII

Of poor Pedrillo something still remained,
 But was used sparingly. Some were afraid,
 And others still their appetites constrained,
 Or but at times a little supper made;
 All except Juan, who throughout abstained,
 Chewing a piece of bamboo and some lead.
 At length they caught two boobies and a noddy,
 And then they left off eating the dead body.

LXXXIII

And if Pedrillo's fate should shocking be,
 Remember Ugolino condescends
 To eat the head of his archenemy,
 The moment after he politely ends
 His tale. If foes be food in hell, at sea
 'Tis surely fair to dine upon our friends
 When shipwreck's short allowance grows too scanty,
 Without being much more horrible than Dante.

THIN ENOUGH ✧ Emaciation jokes! B. is testing the boundaries of taste, with glee.

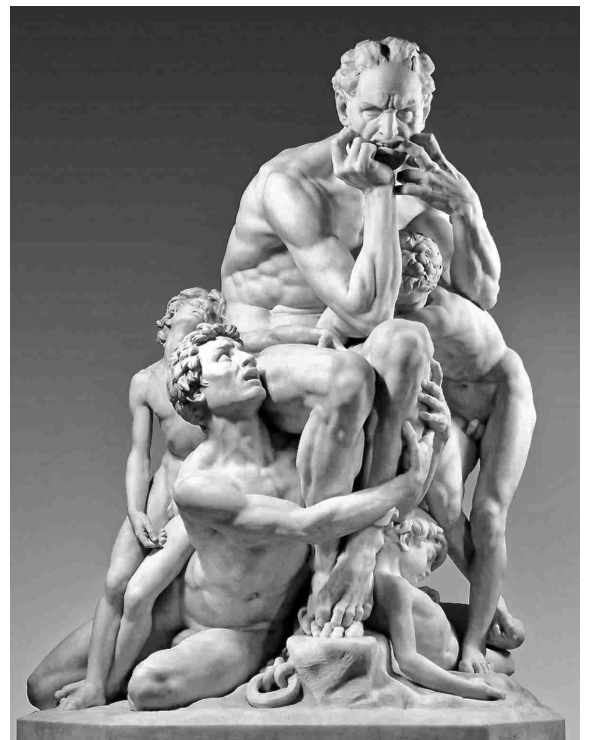
A SMALL PRESENT ✧ A syphilitic chancre, of course.

GENERAL SUBSCRIPTION ✧ Too much *whoring*. B. means the ladies clubbed together to make this present to him, each by contributing something.

BAMBOO AND SOME LEAD ✧ A story from the 1802 wreck of the Spanish warship *Juno* about the survivors chewing bits of lead or wood to bring saliva to the mouth to give some relief from thirst. Thos. Moore, in his biography of B., says he had read about the wreck of the *Juno* while at school in Dulwich (before switching to Harrow).

TWO BOOBIES AND A NODDY ✧ Sea birds. So called because they are easily caught by hand when they alight and are reputed to be "dummies". Capt. William Bligh records his starving companions in *The Bounty's* longboat catching these birds.

UGOLINO... MORE HORRIBLE THAN DANTE ✧ In Book XXXIII of the *Inferno*, Dante meets the ghost of Ugolino della Gherardesca, a Pisan nobleman who, during the 13th century civil wars, switched sides once too often. He was imprisoned by his enemies with his two sons and two grandsons in a tower. On the orders of the Archbishop of Pisa, the keys to their cell were thrown in the river and they were allowed to starve to death. In Dante's poem, Ugolino recalls at one point biting his hand in grief for the fate of his children. Seeing this, and thinking it was hunger made him do so, his sons said: "*Father, it will much less painful for us if you eat us. You clothed us in this wretched flesh, strip it from us yourself.*" Dante imagines Uguolino taking revenge on the bishop eternally in hell by eating his head. B.s claim that Dante's grisly tale puts his facetious fable *in perspective* is one of his many ironic protests in *Don X Juan* that his "excesses" are no greater than those of classical authors and their works.



UGOLINO ✎ Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's *Michelangeliste* portrayal of Ugolino in prison, tearing at his own face, angry and starving, is in the Metropolitan Museum in N.Y.

LXXXIV

And the same night there fell a shower of rain,
 For which their mouths gaped like the cracks of earth
 When dried to summer dust. Till taught by pain,
 Men really know not what good water's worth.
 If you had been in Turkey or in Spain,
 Or with a famished boat's crew had your berth,
 Or in the desert heard the camel's bell,
 You'd wish yourself where truth is—in a well.

LXXXV

It poured down torrents, but they were no richer
 Until they found a ragged piece of sheet,
 Which served them as a sort of spongy pitcher,
 And when they deemed its moisture was complete,
 They wrung it out, and though a thirsty ditcher
 Might not have thought the scanty draught so sweet
 As a full pot of porter, to their thinking
 They ne'er till now had known the joys of drinking.

LXXXVI

And their baked lips, with many a bloody crack,
 Sucked in the moisture, which like nectar streamed.
 Their throats were ovens, their swoll'n tongues were black,
 As the rich man's in hell, who vainly screamed
 To beg the beggar, who could not rain back
 A drop of dew, when every drop had seemed
 To taste of heaven. If this be true, indeed
 Some Christians have a comfortable creed.

LXXXVII

There were two fathers in this ghastly crew
 And with them their two sons, of whom the one
 Was more robust and hardy to the view,
 But he died early, and when he was gone,
 His nearest messmate told his sire, who threw
 One glance on him and said, 'Heaven's will be done!
 I can do nothing,' and he saw him thrown
 Into the deep without a tear or groan.

TRUTH IS—IN A WELL ✧ Either the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (6th century B.C.E.) or, perhaps, Democritus of Abdera (5th century B.C.E.) said that truth was to be found only with great difficulty, as if buried and neglected at the bottom of a well.




THE RICH MAN'S IN HELL ✧ A reference to Jesus' parable (Luke, 16) of Lazarus the beggar, who goes to heaven, and Dives the wealthy man, who goes to Hell either because he had been uncharitable to Lazarus or because he was wealthy. Or both. Lazarus spurns Dives' cry from Hell for relief because... Call it *social justice* if you wish: that is what Jesus seems to mean. Still, it prompts some to indulge a self-satisfied triumph in the suffering of others that B. describes, sarcastically, as a "comfortable creed". The image is from an 11th century illustrated gospel.

TWO FATHERS IN THIS GHASTLY CREW... ✧ This story, too, taken from an account of the wreck of the *Juno* that B. may be recalling from his schoolboy reading. **PC** notes that B.'s account seems to be influenced, too, by Ugolino's account of the death of his sons in Canto XXXIII of Dante's *Inferno*.

LXXXVIII

The other father had a weaklier child,
 Of a soft cheek and aspect delicate,
 But the boy bore up long and with a mild
 And patient spirit held aloof his fate.
 Little he said and now and then he smiled,
 As if to win a part from off the weight
 He saw increasing on his father's heart,
 With the deep deadly thought that they must part

LXXXIX

 37'59"

And o'er him bent his sire and never raised
 His eyes from off his face, but wiped the foam
 From his pale lips, and ever on him gazed,
 And when the wished-for shower at length was come,
 And the boy's eyes, which the dull film half glazed,
 Brightened and for a moment seemed to roam,
 He squeezed from out a rag some drops of rain
 Into his dying child's mouth—but in vain.

XC

The boy expired. The father held the clay
 And looked upon it long, and when at last
 Death left no doubt, and the dead burden lay
 Stiff on his heart, and pulse and hope were past,
 He watched it wistfully, until away
 'Twas borne by the rude wave wherein'twas cast.
 Then he himself sunk down all dumb and shivering,
 And gave no sign of life, save his limbs quivering.

XCI

Now overhead a rainbow, bursting through
 The scattering clouds, shone, spanning the dark sea,
 Resting its bright base on the quivering blue,
 And all within its arch appeared to be
 Clearer than that without, and its wide hue
 Waxed broad and waving, like a banner free,
 Then changed like to a bow that's bent, and then
 Forsook the dim eyes of these shipwrecked men.

A RAINBOW ✧ The rainbow and the dove-like bird (Stanza XCIV) are, again, echoes of the story of Noah in the Book of Genesis where the rainbow is described as the sign of God's covenant with mankind not to wipe out all living things because of man's sin.

XCII

It changed of course—a heavenly chameleon,
 The airy child of vapour and the sun,
 Brought forth in purple, cradled in vermilion,
 Baptized in molten gold and swathed in dun,
Glittering like crescents o'er a Turk's pavilion
 And blending every colour into one,
 Just like a black eye in a recent scuffle
 (For sometimes we must box without the muffle).

XCIII

Our shipwrecked seamen thought it a good omen;
 It is as well to think so now and then.
 'Twas an old custom of the Greek and Roman,
 And may become of great advantage when
 Folks are discouraged; and most surely no men
 Had greater need to nerve themselves again
 Than these, and so this rainbow looked like hope,
 Quite a celestial kaleidoscope.

XCIV

About this time a beautiful white bird,
 Webfooted, not unlike a dove in size
 And plumage (probably it might have erred
 Upon its course), passed oft before their eyes
 And tried to perch, although it saw and heard
 The men within the boat, and in this guise
 It came and went and fluttered round them till
 Night fell. This seemed a better omen still.

XCV

But in this case I also must remark,
 'Twas well this bird of promise did not perch,
 Because the tackle of our shattered bark
 Was not so safe for roosting as a church,
 And had it been the dove from Noah's ark,
 Returning there from her successful search,
 Which in their way that moment chanced to fall,
 They would have eat her, olive branch and all.

GLITTERING LIKE CRESCENTS ✧ The golden crescent was already a symbol of the Ottoman Turks before they took Constantinople in 1453 and made it their capital. The symbol had long been associated with Byzantium — Constantinople's former name — as the symbol of the Moon Goddess Astarte (or Hecate) who had protected the city from the invasion of Philip of Macedon in the 4th century B.C.E.

BOX WITHOUT THE MUFFLE ✧ Bare-knuckle boxing. The twenty-something B. — in an effort to control his weight — trained with "Gentleman John" Jackson, former Champion of England in bare-knuckle boxing, at his fashionable studio in Bond St. in London. B. wore gloves, however, a pair of which is preserved at Newstead.

KALEIDOSCOPE ✧ It's not clear what B. means by describing the rainbow this way, except perhaps as a mutable vision of pleasing colors. *PC* suggests B. includes the line as a sort of *wink* to his publisher. He notes: "...[The kaleidoscope was] invented by Sir David Brewster in 1817. Murray sent B. one on September 22 1818, a month before he started writing Canto II, describing it as ... a newly invented Toy which if not yet seen in Venice will I trust amuse some of your female friends" The instrument was extremely popular: although Brewster patented it, it was immediately pirated and sold in the hundreds of thousands.

A BEAUTIFUL WHITE BIRD ✧ There are several echoes in these stanzas of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which was published in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798: for example the image of "baked lips with many a bloody crack" in [Stanza LXXXVI](#). Here is another: the albatross that the Mariner killed (and that became an eternal burden to him) was just such a white bird with webbed feet, although much larger than a dove. *PC* believes, however, that B. bases this incident on another shipwreck story from Dayell.

OLIVE BRANCH AND ALL ✧ As the waters of the deluge receded, Noah's Ark came to rest on Mt Ararat (*Genesis* 8, 8-12). Three times Noah released a dove to check whether there was dry land. The bird returned the second time with an olive leaf in its beak, indicating the waters had fallen far enough for the trees to stand above the surface. On the third occasion the dove did not return.

XCVI

With twilight it again came on to blow,
But not with violence. The stars shone out,
The boat made way; yet now they were so low
They knew not where nor what they were about.
Some fancied they saw land, and some said, 'No!'
The frequent fog banks gave them cause to doubt.
Some swore that they heard breakers, others guns,
And all mistook about the latter once.

XCVII

As morning broke the light wind died away,
When he who had the watch sung out and swore,
If 'twas not land that rose with the sun's ray,
He wished that land he never might see more.
And the rest rubbed their eyes and saw a bay
Or thought they saw, and shaped their course for shore,
For shore it was and gradually grew
Distinct and high and palpable to view.

XCVIII

And then of these some part burst into tears,
And others, looking with a stupid stare,
Could not yet separate their hopes from fears
And seemed as if they had no further care,
While a few prayed (the first time for some years).
And at the bottom of the boat three were
Asleep; they shook them by the hand and head
And tried to awaken them, but found them dead.


XCIX

The day before, fast sleeping on the water,
They found a turtle of the hawksbill kind,
And by good fortune gliding softly, caught her,
Which yielded a day's life and to their mind
Proved even still a more nutritious matter,
Because it left encouragement behind.
They thought that in such perils more than chance
Had sent them this for their deliverance.

C

The land appeared a high and rocky coast,
 And higher grew the mountains as they drew,
 Set by a current, toward it. They were lost
 In various conjectures, for none knew
 To what part of the earth they had been tost,
 So changeable had been the winds that blew.
 Some thought it was Mount Etna, some the highlands
 Of Candia, Cyprus, Rhodes, or other islands.

CI

 43'22"

Meantime the current, with a rising gale,
 Still set them onwards to the welcome shore,
 Like Charon's bark of spectres, dull and pale.
 Their living freight was now reduced to four,
 And three dead, whom their strength could not avail
 To heave into the deep with those before,
 Though the two sharks still followed them and dashed
 The spray into their faces as they splashed.

CII

Famine, despair, cold, thirst, and heat had done
 Their work on them by turns, and thinned them to
 Such things a mother had not known her son
 Amidst the skeletons of that gaunt crew.
 By night chilled, by day scorched, thus one by one
 They perished, until withered to these few,
 But chiefly by a species of self-slaughter,
 In washing down Pedrillo with salt water.

CIII

As they drew nigh the land, which now was seen
 Unequal in its aspect here and there,
 They felt the freshness of its growing green,
 That waved in forest-tops and smoothed the air,
 And fell upon their glazed eyes like a screen
 From glistening waves and skies so hot and bare.
 Lovely seemed any object that should sweep
 Away the vast, salt, dread, eternal deep.

MOUNT ETNA ✧ These sailors are poor navigators: their speculations on their whereabouts in this line and the next range from Sicily — Mt Etna, the highest peak in the Mediterranean — to near the coast of Turkey (Rhodes). It stretches credulity to suggest that the longboat could have drifted from the Gulf of Lion to the Aegean. Still, B. wants to land Juan on an island that lies East of the Greek peninsula.

CANDIA ✧ Crete. The island was so-called from 1204 when the Venetians seized it from the Moslems who had taken it from Byzantine empire four centuries earlier, when it had been called "Crete". It reverted to Greek control and its ancient greek name after Byron's time, since when the Greeks and the Turks have continued to fight for possession of it.



CHARON'S BARK OF SPECTRES ✧ Charon was the boatman who, in Greek myth, rowed the souls of the dead across the rivers Acheron (river of woe) into Hades. This image of the deamon enjoying his dreadful task is from Michelangelo's vision of the *Last Judgement* in the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.

CIV

The shore looked wild without a trace of man
 And girt by formidable waves; but they
 Were mad for land, and thus their course they ran,
 Though right ahead the roaring breakers lay.
 A reef between them also now began
 To show its boiling surf and bounding spray,
 But finding no place for their landing better,
 They ran the boat for shore and overset her.

CV

But in his native stream, the Guadalquivir,
 Juan to lave his youthful limbs was wont,
 And having learnt to swim in that sweet river,
 Had often turned the art to some account.
 A better swimmer you could scarce see ever,
 He could perhaps have passed the Hellespont,
 As once (a feat on which ourselves we prided)
 Leander, Mr Ekenhead, and I did.

CVI

So here, though faint, emaciated, and stark,
 He buoyed his boyish limbs and strove to ply
 With the quick wave and gain, ere it was dark,
 The beach which lay before him, high and dry.
 The greatest danger here was from a shark,
 That carried off his neighbour by the thigh.
 As for the other two they could not swim,
 So nobody arrived on shore but him.

CVII

Nor yet had he arrived but for the oar,
 Which providentially for him was washed
 Just as his feeble arms could strike no more,
 And the hard wave o'erwhelmed him as'twas dashed
 Within his grasp. He clung to it, and sore
 The waters beat while he thereto was lashed.
 At last with swimming, wading, scrambling, he
 Rolled on the beach, half senseless, from the sea.

THE HELLESPONT ✧ A narrow strait about 60Kms (40 miles) long and varying in width from just over a kilometre (3/4 mi) to more than six kilometres (4 mi). It was known, even in Byron's time, as the Dardanelles: named after Dardanus, the legendary king of Troy, which was located on it's Asian shore, the southern side of the strait.

FEAT...PRIDED ✧ On 3 May, 1810, on board a British naval frigate taking him to Constantinople, Byron — who was a strong swimmer — and Lieutenant Ekenhead swam from Sestos, on the European shore to Abydos on the Asian shore. On the same day B. wrote to his tutor at Harrow school, Henry Drury: "*...the immediate distance is not above a mile but the current renders it hazardous, so much so, that I doubt whether Leander's conjugal powers must not have been exhausted in his passage to Paradise.*". B. records this was his *second* attempt in a week; the first was defeated by strong currents.

Leander is a figure of legend: a young man from Abydos who fell in love with Hero, a priestess of Aphrodite — the Greek goddess of love — in the temple at Sestos. He would swim the Hellespont every evening to be with her, aiming for a lamp that she kept lit in a tower for him. But their summer of love came to an end when a storm hit the strait, blew out Hero's lamp, and Leander became lost and drowned. When Hero found his body washed up on the shore she killed herself by jumping out of the tower. B.'s grouping of the three names — the Lieutenant, himself and Leander — is a boast, of course, that all three are legendary figures.

CVIII

There breathless, with his digging nails he clung
 Fast to the sand, lest the returning wave,
 From whose reluctant roar his life he wrung,
 Should suck him back to her insatiate grave.
 And there he lay full length, where he was flung,
 Before the entrance of a cliff-worn cave,
 With just enough of life to feel its pain
 And deem that it was saved, perhaps in vain.



ROLLED ON THE BEACH, HALF SENSELESS ✎ Nicholas Régnier's 17th century depiction of Hero lamenting over the body of Leander, washed ashore (now in the National Gallery of Victoria). One of two models for Juan's translation from the squalid shipwreck to Haidée's arms is that of Leander's marathon crossings of the Hellespont to meet with Hero. Juan is not dead, of course, although his love affair with Haidée ends almost as badly, in Canto IV.

CIX

With slow and staggering effort he arose,
But sunk again upon his bleeding knee
And quivering hand; and then he looked for those
Who long had been his mates upon the sea,
But none of them appeared to share his woes,
Save one, a corpse from out the famished three,
Who died two days before and now had found
An unknown barren beach for burial ground.

CX

And as he gazed, his dizzy brain spun fast
And down he sunk, and as he sunk, the sand
Swam round and round, and all his senses passed.
He fell upon his side, and his stretched hand
Drooped dripping on the oar (their jury mast),
And like a withered lily, on the land
His slender frame and pallid aspect lay,
As fair a thing as e'er was formed of clay.

CXI

How long in his damp trance young Juan lay
He knew not, for the earth was gone for him,
And time had nothing more of night nor day
For his congealing blood and senses dim.
And how this heavy faintness passed away
He knew not, till each painful pulse and limb
And tingling vein seemed throbbing back to life,
For Death, though vanquished, still retired with strife.

CXII

His eyes he opened, shut, again unclosed,
For all was doubt and dizziness. He thought
He still was in the boat and had but dozed,
And felt again with his despair o'erwrought,
And wished it death in which he had reposed,
And then once more his feelings back were brought,
And slowly by his swimming eyes was seen
A lovely female face of Seventeen.

SEVENTEEN ✧ Approximately Juan's age, at this point in the poem.




LITERARY MODELS 🍷 Byron had several the classical models for his story of Juan and Haidée. The closest is the story of Odysseus and Nausicaä in Book VI of Homer's *Odyssey*. Odysseus, who is attempting to return home from Troy, is held captive by the charms of Calypso on her island of Ogyia for seven years. He escapes on a raft but, by the enmity of the sea-god Poseidon, a storm overturns the raft and he swims ashore at a river estuary on the island of Schería (or Phaecia).

There, naked and exhausted he hides in some bushes and falls asleep. Nausicaä “of the beautiful robes”, daughter the Phaeacian king Alcinous, comes down to the river with her handmaids to wash their clothes. While waiting for the clothes to dry they are playing naked ball games when the ball flies into the bushes where Odysseus is sleeping. He wakes and emerges, also naked and crusted with salt-spray; the handmaids fly but Nausicaä stays and Odysseus appeals for her help which, of course, she gives. . .

This same theme of the stranded sailor and the maiden on the beach occurs more than once in the Homeric epic. A second episode that also finds an echo in Cantos II and III of *Don X Juan* is the story of the Menelaus, King of Sparta who, stranded on his return journey from Troy, meets the nymph Eidothea on a beach. She helps him struggle with and overcome her father Proteus, an ancient shape-changing God (like Haidée's father, the mercurial Lambro), who provides Menelaus with important information for his onward journey.

The painting of Odysseus and Nausicaä is by the French caricaturist and artist, Jean Veber.

CXIII

 48'40"

'T was bending close o'er his, and the small mouth
 Seem'd almost prying into his for breath;
 And chafing him, the soft warm hand of youth
 Recall'd his answering spirits back from death;
 And, bathing his chill temples, tried to soothe
 Each pulse to animation, till beneath
 Its gentle touch and trembling care, a sigh
 To these kind efforts made a low reply.

CXIV

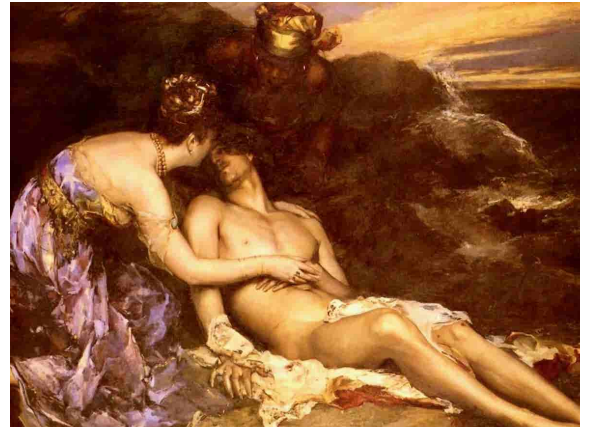
Then was the cordial poured, and mantle flung
 Around his scarce-clad limbs; and the fair arm
 Raised higher the faint head which o'er it hung.
 And her transparent cheek, all pure and warm,
 Pillowed his death-like forehead. Then she wrung
 His dewy curls, long drenched by every storm,
 And watched with eagerness each throb that drew
 A sigh from his heaved bosom—and hers too.

CXV

And lifting him with care into the cave,
 The gentle girl and her attendant—one
 Young, yet her elder, and of brow less grave,
 And more robust of figure—then begun
 To kindle fire, and as the new flames gave
 Light to the rocks that roofed them, which the sun
 Had never seen, the maid or whatsoe'er
 She was appeared distinct and tall and fair.

CXVI

Her brow was overhung with coins of gold,
 That sparkled o'er the auburn of her hair,
 Her clustering hair, whose longer locks were rolled
 In braids behind, and though her stature were
 Even of the highest for a female mould,
 They nearly reached her heel. And in her air
 There was a something which bespoke command,
 As one who was a lady in the land.



AROUND HIS SCARCE-CLAD LIMBS ✍️ “Juan and Haidée” was a favorite topic of Salon artists on both sides of the Channel in the last decades of the 19th century. Here, the image is from a painting by Alfred Roll, a student of later the impressionist painters including Bonnat, who adopted an academic style. He pictures Zoe as a negress.

CXVII

Her hair, I said, was auburn, but her eyes
 Were black as death, their lashes the same hue,
 Of downcast length, in whose silk shadow lies
 Deepest attraction, for when to the view
 Forth from its raven fringe the full glance flies,
 Ne'er with such force the swiftest arrow flew.
 'Tis as the snake late coiled, who pours his length
 And hurls at once his venom and his strength.

CXVIII

Her brow was white and low, her cheek's pure dye
 Like twilight rosy still with the set sun.
 Short upper lip—sweet lips! that make us sigh
 Ever to have seen such; for she was one
 Fit for the model of a statuary
 (A race of mere impostors, when all's done;
 I've seen much finer women, ripe and real,
 Than all the nonsense of their stone ideal).

CXIX

I'll tell you why I say so, for 'tis just
 One should not rail without a decent cause.
 There was *an Irish lady*, to whose bust
 I ne'er saw justice done, and yet she was
 A frequent model; and if e'er she must
 Yield to stern Time and Nature's wrinkling laws,
 They will destroy a face which mortal thought
 Ne'er compassed, nor less mortal chisel wrought.

CXX

And such was she, the lady of the cave.
 Her dress was very different from the Spanish,
 Simpler and yet of colours not so grave,
 For as you know, the Spanish women banish
 Bright hues when out of doors, and yet, while wave
 Around them (what I hope will never vanish)
 The *basquina* and the mantilla, they
 Seem at the same time mystical and gay.

AN IRISH LADY ✧ Apparently Lady Adelaide Forbes, a daughter of Thomas Moore's patron, whom in 1813 B. imagined he might court with a view to marriage (he was currently entangled in an affair with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh and half-earnestly trying to seduce Lady Frances Webster). He was much struck with her classical beauty that he later claimed — in Byronic gender-bending fashion — was identical to the Apollo Belvedere. Unfortunately, although B. says she was a "frequent model", I have been unable to find any of her portraits. She never married and died in 1858.

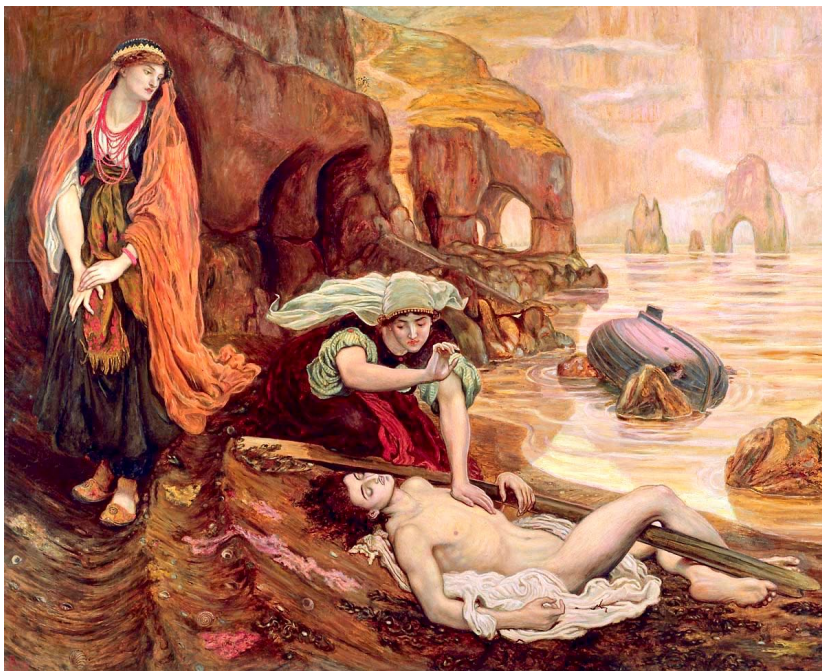
BASQUINA ✧ A sort of dark "over-dress" that covered the indoor dress when going out.

CXXI

But with our damsel this was not the case;
 Her dress was many-coloured, finely spun.
 Her locks curled negligently round her face,
 But through them gold and gems profusely shone.
 Her girdle sparkled, and the richest lace
 Flowed in her veil, and many a precious stone
 Flashed on her little hand, but what was shocking,
 Her small snow feet had slippers, but no stocking.

CXXII

The other female's dress was not unlike,
 But of inferior materials. She
 Had not so many ornaments to strike,
 Her hair had silver only, bound to be
 Her dowry, and her veil, in form alike,
 Was coarser, and her air, though firm, less free.
 Her hair was thicker, but less long, her eyes
 As black, but quicker and of smaller size.



HER DRESS WAS MANY-COLOURED 🍃 Ford Maddox Brown's many-coloured, pre-raphaelite-ish version of the scene. Haidée, standing outside the central lines of the image, seems rather more detached than Byron describes her and the "beach" simply implausible. Brown was evidently more interested in decorative elements — costume, gesture — than in emotional realism.

🍃 *And these two tended him...*

CXXIII

And these two tended him and cheered him both
 With food and raiment and those soft attentions,
 Which are (as I must own) of female growth,
 And have ten thousand delicate inventions.
 They made a most superior mess of broth,
 A thing which poesy but seldom mentions,
 But the best dish that e'er was cooked since Homer's
Achilles ordered dinner for newcomers.


CXXIV

I'll tell you who they were, this female pair,
 Lest they should seem princesses in disguise.
 Besides I hate all mystery and that air
 Of claptrap, which your recent poets prize.
 And so in short the girls they really were
 They shall appear before your curious eyes,
 Mistress and maid; the first was only daughter
 Of an old man, who lived upon the water.

CXXV

A fisherman he had been in his youth,
 And still a sort of fisherman was he.
 But other speculations were, in sooth,
 Added to his connexion with the sea,
 Perhaps not so respectable, in truth.
 A little smuggling and some piracy
 Left him at last the sole of many masters
 Of an ill-gotten million of piastres.

CXXVI

 54'36"

A fisher therefore was he, though of men,
 Like Peter the Apostle, and he fished
 For wandering merchant vessels now and then
 And sometimes caught as many as he wished.
 The cargoes he confiscated, and gain
 He sought in the slave market too and dished
 Full many a morsel for that Turkish trade,
 By which no doubt a good deal may be made.

ACHILLES ORDERED DINNER ✧ In Book IX of *The Iliad*, Achilles offers dinner to a delegation comprising Odysseus, Ajax and Phoenix, sent by Agamemnon to convince Achilles to return to the battle. The Homeric dinner was not, however, *broth* but a baron of lamb, a fat goat and a chine of pork — the rich fatty cut across the shoulders — spit-roasted by Achilles and served with bread and wine.

PIASTRES ✧ A name for different pieces of currency: a low-value Turkish coin or a high-value Spanish one — at one point Spanish *pieces of eight*. Presumably, in Lambro's case, it refers to the latter.

PETER THE APOSTLE ✧ In Matthew 4:19, Jesus says to the Gallilean fisherman Peter "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" Lambro is a pirate, however and "fishes" only for slaves.

CXXVII

He was a Greek, and on his isle had built
 (One of the wild and smaller Cyclades)
 A very handsome house from out his guilt,
 And there he lived exceedingly at ease.
 Heaven knows what cash he got or blood he spilt;
 A sad old fellow was he, if you please.
 But this I know, it was a spacious building,
 Full of barbaric carving, paint, and gilding.

CXXVIII

He had an only daughter, called Haidée,
 The greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles;
 Besides, so very beautiful was she
 Her dowry was as nothing to her smiles.
 Still in her teens, and like a lovely tree
 She grew to womanhood, and between whiles
 Rejected several suitors, just to learn
 How to accept a better in his turn.

CXXIX

And walking out upon the beach below
 The cliff, towards sunset, on that day she found,
 Insensible, not dead, but nearly so,
 Don Juan, almost famished and half drowned.
 But being naked, she was shocked, you know,
 Yet deemed herself in common pity bound,
 As far as in her lay, 'to take him in,
 A stranger' dying, with so white a skin.

CXXX

But taking him into her father's house
 Was not exactly the best way to save,
 But like conveying to the cat the mouse,
 Or people in a trance into their grave,
 Because the good old man had so much *vous*,
 Unlike the honest Arab thieves so brave,
 He would have hospitably cured the stranger
 And sold him instantly when out of danger.

CYCLADES ✧ The geography of this Canto is, at best, fanciful. The Cyclades is a group of islands that, as their name suggests, surround (Ancient greek: κύκλος/kúklos meaning 'round about') the island of Delos in the Aegean Sea, south-east of the Greek peninsula. Hence, B. calls Haidée an "*heiress of the Eastern Isles*" in the next stanza. Since the Eastern end of the Mediterranean borders a region on the coast of Turkey the ancient Greeks called "Ionia" (spelled Ἰωνία), the region is called Ionian. B. describes Haidée's accent as "Ionian" in stanza CXLIX. Also, in Canto III B. tells us that the island has "*Ionian elegance*".

Still, the Cyclades are an incredible distance for the shipwrecked sailors to have travelled (in an open boat, without sight of other ships) from the storm in the Gulf of Lion. Could B. mean some *other Ionia*? It turns out the term also refers to the islands of the *Ionian sea* (spelled Ἰόνια) that lies to the *west* of the Greek peninsula. This is a slightly more plausible landing for the sole survivor of a shipwreck in the Western Mediterranean. Odysseus' home island of Ithaka is there, too. But Byron knew his Greek geography too well to mix up the two regions.

BARBARIC CARVING ✧ When B. gets around to describing Lambro's house in some detail in Canto III, there's lavish decoration but no sign of *barbarism*.

HAIDÉE ✧ The name (Χαίδη in Greek) means "the caress" or "the caressed one". It first occurs in one of B.'s verses from 1811: *Translation of a Romaic Song*

I enter thy garden of roses,
 Beloved and fair Haideé,
 Each morning where Flora reposes,
 For surely I see her in thee. . .

The folksong was transcribed for him by Marianna "Dudu" Roque, the daughter of a Hellenized French merchant at Athens who had befriended Byron and Hobhouse in 1810-11. B.'s manuscript of the translation is dated the day before he left Athens to return to London.

VOUS ✧ *Nous*: in english usage, shrewdness

CXXXI

And therefore with her maid she thought it best
 (A virgin always on her maid relies)
 To place him in the cave for present rest.
 And when at last he opened his black eyes,
 Their charity increased about their guest,
 And their compassion grew to such a size
 It opened half the turnpike gates to heaven
 (St Paul says 'tis the toll which must be given).

CXXXII

They made a fire, but such a fire as they
 Upon the moment could contrive with such
 Materials as were cast up round the bay,
 Some broken planks and oars, that to the touch
 Were nearly tinder, since so long they lay;
 A mast was almost crumbled to a crutch,
 But by God's grace, here wrecks were in such plenty
 That there was fuel to have furnished twenty.

CXXXIII

He had a bed of furs and a *pelisse*,
 For Haidée stripped her *sables* off to make
 His couch, and that he might be more at ease
 And warm, in case by chance he should awake,
 They also gave a petticoat apiece,
 She and her maid, and promised by daybreak
 To pay him a fresh visit with a dish
 For breakfast of eggs, coffee, bread, and fish.

CXXXIV

And thus they left him to his lone repose.
 Juan slept like a top or like the dead,
 Who sleep at last perhaps (God only knows),
 Just for the present. And in his lulled head
 Not even a vision of his former woes
 Throbbled in accurséd dreams, which sometimes spread
 Unwelcome visions of our former years,
 Till the eye, cheated, opens thick with tears.

ST PAUL SAYS ✧ In his first epistle to the Corinthians (13, 1-13): "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing ... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*"

Of course, B. does not mean that Haidée's *compassion* was growing, but another warm sentiment that opens more earthly gates...

PELISSE ✧ A fur-lined mantle or cloak. Hmm... somehow *sables* doesn't seem quite in keeping with Haidée's other garments and stocking-less feet, described above.

CXXXV

Young Juan slept all dreamless, but the maid,
 Who smoothed his pillow as she left the den,
 Looked back upon him and a moment stayed
 And turned, believing that he called again.
 He slumbered, yet she thought, at least she said
 (The heart will slip even as the tongue and pen),
 He had pronounced her name, but she forgot
 That at this moment Juan knew it not.


CXXXVI

And pensive to her father's house she went,
 Enjoining silence strict to Zoe, who
 Better than her knew what in fact she meant,
 She being wiser by a year or two.
 A year or two's an age when rightly spent,
 And Zoe spent hers, as most women do,
 In gaining all that useful sort of knowledge
 Which is acquired in Nature's good old college.

CXXXVII

The morn broke, and found Juan slumbering still
 Fast in his cave, and nothing clashed upon
 His rest. The rushing of the neighbouring rill
 And the young beams of the excluded sun
 Troubled him not, and he might sleep his fill.
 And need he had of slumber yet, for none
 Had suffered more; his hardships were comparative
 To those related in my grand-dad's narrative.

CXXXVIII

 59'55"

Not so Haidée; she sadly tossed and tumbled
 And started from her sleep, and turning o'er,
 Dreamed of a thousand wrecks, o'er which she stumbled,
 And handsome corpses strewed upon the shore,
 And woke her maid so early that she grumbled,
 And called her father's old slaves up, who swore
 In several oaths—Armenian, Turk, and Greek -
 They knew not what to think of such a freak.

MY GRAND-DAD'S NARRATIVE ✧ "A Narrative of the Honourable John Byron (Commander in a late expedition round the world)", Adm. John ('Foul-weather Jack') Byron's popular history — referenced [above](#) — of his experiences as a midshipman on the *Wager* when he was shipwrecked, marooned and imprisoned in Chile.

CXXXIX

But up she got and up she made them get,
 With some pretence about the sun, that makes
 Sweet skies just when he rises or is set.

And'tis no doubt a sight to see when breaks
 Bright Phoebus while the mountains still are wet

With mist, and every bird with him awakes,
 And night is flung off like a mourning suit
 Worn for a husband, or some other brute.

PHOEBUS ✧ The name of the god Apollo as the sun god.
 In greek *phoibos*, lit. 'bright, shining'.

CXL

I say, the sun is a most glorious sight.

I've seen him rise full oft; indeed of late
 I have sate up on purpose all the night,
 Which hastens, as physicians say, one's fate.
 And so all ye who would be in the right

In health and purse, begin your day to date
 From daybreak, and when coffined at fourscore,
 Engrave upon the plate, you rose at four.

CXLI

And Haidée met the morning face to face.

Her own was freshest, though a feverish flush
 Had dyed it with the headlong blood, whose race
 From heart to cheek is curbed into a blush,
 Like to a torrent which a mountain's base,

That overpowers some alpine river's rush,
 Checks to a lake, whose waves in circles spread;
 Or the Red Sea—but the sea is not red.

THE SEA IS NOT RED ✧ No... it's an ordinary blue color. At one level, this note is just B.'s comic deflation of an elaborate simile ('Like to a torrent...') in a form used by classical authors that sounds rather stilted in modern English. But it recalls a mystery about the name of this large gulf separating Asia and Africa that was remarked by the Greek geographer Strabo as early as the 1st Century C.E. Strabo mentions speculations about the name being due to the refraction of the sun's light, or reflections of the color of the surrounding landscape or the color of corals in the shallows. These days there are suggestions, too, that it might be due to the color of an algal bloom at the northern end of the sea. But *IA* offers the most convincing explanation of all. He speculates that the ancient Jews called it the "Sea of Edom", referring to the ancient land of Edom that lay across the Jordan valley between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba (or Gulf of Eilat) that is the north-eastern tip of the Red Sea. The word *Edom* means *Red* in Hebrew, a reference to the red-dish soil of the Edomite mountains or possibly to Edom's founder Esau — Jacob's older brother — who is described (Genesis 25:25) as "... red, all over like a hairy garment;". Asimov believes the Greek-speaking Jews who first translated Genesis simply translated the name of the sea.

CXLII

And down the cliff the island virgin came,
 And near the cave her quick light footsteps drew,
 While the sun smiled on her with his first flame,

And young Aurora kissed her lips with dew,
 Taking her for a sister. Just the same
 Mistake you would have made on seeing the two,
 Although the mortal, quite as fresh and fair,
 Had all the advantage too of not being air.

AURORA ✧ The goddess of Dawn.

CXLIII

And when into the cavern Haidée stepped
 All timidly, yet rapidly, she saw
 That like an infant Juan sweetly slept.
 And then she stopped and stood as if in awe
 (For sleep is awful) and on tiptoe crept
 And wrapt him closer, lest the air, too raw,
 Should reach his blood, then o'er him still as death
 Bent, with hushed lips, that drank his scarce drawn breath.

CXLIV

And thus like to an angel o'er the dying
 Who die in righteousness she leaned; and there
 All tranquilly the shipwrecked boy was lying,
 As o'er him lay the calm and stirless air.
 But Zoe the meantime some eggs was frying,
 Since, after all, no doubt the youthful pair
 Must breakfast; and betimes, lest they should ask it,
 She drew out her provision from the basket.

CXLV

She knew that the best feelings must have victual,
 And that a shipwrecked youth would hungry be.
 Besides, being less in love, she yawned a little
 And felt her veins chilled by the neighbouring sea.
 And so she cooked their breakfast to a tittle;
 I can't say that she gave them any tea,
 But there were eggs, fruit, coffee, bread, fish, honey,
 With Scio wine, and all for love, not money.

CXLVI

And Zoe, when the eggs were ready and
 The coffee made, would fain have wakened Juan,
 But Haidée stopped her with her quick small hand,
 And without word, a sign her finger drew on
 Her lip, which Zoe needs must understand,
 And the first breakfast spoilt, prepared a new one,
 Because her mistress would not let her break
 That sleep which seemed as it would ne'er awake.

AN ANGEL O'ER THE DYING ✧ If this image seems familiar to us it may be from the use of weeping or guardian angels as funeral sculptures: an iconography that belongs mostly to the late 19th century. B.'s readers would have recognized the idea of an angel as *psychopomp*, conducting the righteous to heaven which appears here and there in scriptures e.g. Luke 16:22 where the dying Lazarus is carried by angels to "the bosom of Abraham". A similar image appears in Norse mythology, too, of the Valkyrie bringing dead warriors to Valhalla. But his image of an angel cradling the dying may originate with Byron. The christian tradition of "guardian angels" was elevated to an article of faith (possibly by the Jesuits) in the 16th century. But they were militant guardians of the living. Then Juan is not dying or in much danger of dying: hence B.'s delight in contrasting this pious image with that of Zoe frying eggs for breakfast. Later, in Stanza CCIV, B. depicts both Juan and Haidée as angels in each others' eyes.

Scio ✧ The Greek island of Khios (Chios). Located off the West Coast of Turkey, said to be the birthplace of Homer and renowned once for its wine. Apparently Lambro kept Chian wine in his cellar because in Canto III we find drunken guests at a banquet at his house helping themselves liberally to this same wine.

CXLVII

For still he lay, and on his thin worn cheek
 A purple *hectic* played like dying day
 On the snow-tops of distant hills. The streak
 Of sufferance yet upon his forehead lay,
 Where the blue veins looked shadowy, shrunk, and weak;
 And his black curls were dewy with the spray,
 Which weighed upon them yet, all damp and salt,
 Mixed with the stony vapours of the vault.

HECTIC ✧ A “hectic fever” is fever of consumption or other wasting diseases. Here, a “*purple hectic*” can be taken as simply the flush of such a fever.

CXLVIII

And she bent o’er him, and he lay beneath,
 Hushed as the babe upon its mother’s breast,
 Drooped as the willow when no winds can breathe,
 Lulled like the depth of ocean when at rest,
 Fair as the crowning rose of the whole wreath,
 Soft as the callow cygnet in its nest.
 In short he was a very pretty fellow,
 Although his woes had turned him rather yellow.


CXLIX

He woke and gazed and would have slept again,
 But the fair face which met his eyes forbade
 Those eyes to close, though weariness and pain
 Had further sleep a further pleasure made;
 For woman’s face was never formed in vain
 For Juan, so that even when he prayed
 He turned from grisly saints and martyrs hairy
 To the sweet portraits of the Virgin Mary.

CL

And thus upon his elbow he arose
 And looked upon the lady, in whose cheek
 The pale contended with the purple rose,
 As with an effort she began to speak.
 Her eyes were eloquent, her words would pose,
 Although she told him in good modern Greek
 With an Ionian accent, low and sweet,
 That he was faint and must not talk, but eat.

CLI

 65'58"

Now Juan could not understand a word,
 Being no Grecian, but he had an ear,
 And her voice was the warble of a bird,
 So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear
 That finer, simpler music ne'er was heard,
 The sort of sound we echo with a tear,
 Without knowing why, an overpowering tone,
 Whence melody descends as from a throne.

CLII

And Juan gazed as one who is awoke
 By a distant organ, doubting if he be
 Not yet a dreamer, till the spell is broke
 By the watchman or some such reality,
 Or by one's early valet's curséd knock.
 At least it is a heavy sound to me,
 Who like a morning slumber; for the night
 Shows stars and women in a better light.

CLIII

And Juan too was helped out from his dream
 Or sleep, or whatsoe'er it was, by feeling
 A most prodigious appetite. The steam
 Of Zoe's cookery no doubt was stealing
 Upon his senses, and the kindling beam
 Of the new fire, which Zoe kept up, kneeling
 To stir her viands, made him quite awake
 And long for food, but chiefly a beefsteak.

CLIV

But beef is rare within these oxless isles;
 Goat's flesh there is, no doubt, and kid and mutton.
 And when a holiday upon them smiles,
 A joint upon their barbarous spits they put on.
 But this occurs but seldom, between whiles,
 For some of these are rocks with scarce a hut on;
 Others are fair and fertile, among which
 This, though not large, was one of the most rich.



FABLE OF THE MINOTAUR 🗝 In this stanza and the next, B. makes a slightly obscure joke about the aggressive martial character of beef-eaters such as, preeminently, the British. He suggests that the story of Pasiphæ, the wife of Minos, King of Crete, who had a 'machine' built to allow her to have sex with a bull was not — as you might suppose — just a tale of perverse lust with monstrous results (the Minotaur: the half-man, half-bull, all bad). Instead, B. proposes, it's really a fable about cattle breeding: an art whose practice would add more beef to the Greek diet and improve their successes in war. Modern archeological research showed B. was sort-of-right about the Pasiphæ tale being a ritual myth related to fertility. Not bovine fertility, however. The image is from (another) painting by Alfred Roll entitled "Femme et taureau".

CLV

I say that beef is rare, and can't help thinking
 That the old fable of the Minotaur
 From which our modern morals, rightly shrinking,
 Condemn the royal lady's taste who wore
 A cow's shape for a mask—was only (sinking
 The allegory) a mere type, no more,
 That Pasiphæpromoted breeding cattle,
 To make the Cretans bloodier in battle.

CLVI

For we all know that English people are
 Fed upon beef. I won't say much of beer,
 Because'tis liquor only, and being far
 From this my subject, has no business here.
 We know too they are very fond of war,
 A pleasure, like all pleasures, rather dear;
 So were the Cretans, from which I infer
 That beef and battles both were owing to her.

CLVII

But to resume. The languid Juan raised
 His head upon his elbow and he saw
 A sight on which he had not lately gazed,
 As all his latter meals had been quite raw,
 Three or four things, for which the Lord he praised,
 And feeling still the famished vulture gnaw,
 He fell upon whate'er was offered, like
 A priest, a shark, an alderman, or pike.

PRIEST...PIKE ✧ Conventional images of greed and gluttony. Aldermen were Justices of the Peace who levied civil fines and so were unpopular. A pike is a species of large, predatory fish with a big, toothy, mouth.

CLVIII

He ate, and he was well supplied, and she,
 Who watched him like a mother, would have fed
 Him past all bounds, because she smiled to see
 Such appetite in one she had deemed dead.
 But Zoe, being older than Haidée,
 Knew (by tradition, for she ne'er had read)
 That famished people must be slowly nurst
 And fed by spoonfuls, else they always burst.

CLIX

And so she took the liberty to state,
 Rather by deeds than words, because the case
 Was urgent, that the gentleman whose fate
 Had made her mistress quit her bed to trace
 The seashore at this hour must leave his plate,
 Unless he wished to die upon the place.
 She snatched it and refused another morsel,
 Saying, he had gorged enough to make a horse ill.

CLX

Next they—he being naked, save a tattered
 Pair of scarce decent trousers—went to work
 And in the fire his recent rags they scattered,
 And dressed him, for the present, like a Turk
 Or Greek; that is, although it not much mattered,
 Omitting turban, slippers, pistols, dirk,
 They furnished him, entire except some stitches,
 With a clean shirt and very spacious breeches.

CLXI

And then fair Haidée tried her tongue at speaking,
 But not a word could Juan comprehend,
 Although he listened so that the young Greek in
 Her earnestness would ne'er have made an end,
 And as he interrupted not, went eking
 Her speech out to her protégé and friend,
 Till pausing at the last her breath to take,
 She saw he did not understand Romaic.

CLXII

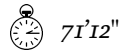
And then she had recourse to nods and signs
 And smiles and sparkles of the speaking eye,
 And read (the only book she could) the lines
 Of his fair face and found, by sympathy,
 The answer eloquent, where the soul shines
 And darts in one quick glance a long reply;
 And thus in every look she saw expres't
 A world of words, and things at which she guessed.

SHE TOOK THE LIBERTY TO STATE ✧ Another scolding servant, like Julia's maid, Antonia, in Canto I.

A CLEAN SHIRT AND VERY SPACIOUS BREECHES ✧ Presumably, Lambro's. Juan is several times dressed by his girlfriends; here, in Canto V by the Sultana Gulbeyaz — where he is dressed as a woman — and in Canto IX by the Empress Catherine.

ROMAIC ✧ Vernacular, modern Greek.

CLXIII



And now by dint of fingers and of eyes
 And words repeated after her, he took
 A lesson in her tongue, but by surmise
 No doubt less of her language than her look.
 As he who studies fervently the skies
 Turns oftener to the stars than to his book,
 Thus Juan learned his alpha beta better
 From Haidée's glance than any graven letter.

CLXIV

'Tis pleasing to be schooled in a strange tongue
 By female lips and eyes, that is, I mean,
 When both the teacher and the taught are young,
 As was the case at least where I have been.
 They smile so when one's right, and when one's wrong
 They smile still more, and then there intervene
 Pressure of hands, perhaps even a chaste kiss.
 I learned the little that I know by this;

CLXV

That is, some words of Spanish, Turk, and Greek,
 Italian not at all, having no teachers.
 Much English I cannot pretend to speak,
 Learning that language chiefly from its preachers,
 Barrow, South, Tillotson, whom every week
 I study, also Blair, the highest reachers
 Of eloquence in piety and prose.
 I hate your poets, so read none of those.

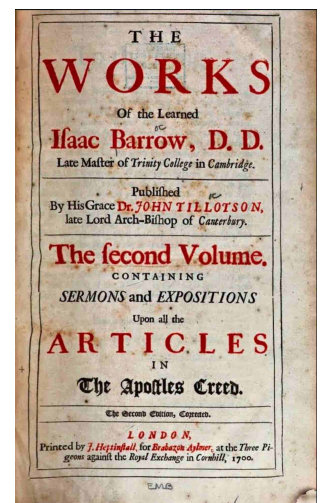
CLXVI

As for the ladies, I have nought to say,
 A wanderer from the British world of fashion,
 Where I, like other 'dogs, have had my day',
 Like other men too, may have had my passion,
 But that, like other things, has passed away,
 And all her fools whom I could lay the lash on,
 Foes, friends, men, women, now are nought to me
 But dreams of what has been, no more to be.

SCHOOLED IN A STRANGE TONGUE ✧ In his biography of B. Thos. Moore claims B. learned Spanish like this, also Greek from Teresa Macri in Athens and Italian from his several girlfriends in Venice including Maria Segrati — whose Italian must have been a lively vernacular.

THE LITTLE THAT I KNOW ✧ Irony. As *PC* notes, B. "was competent-to-fluent in Spanish, Italian, French, Latin, ancient and Modern Greek, Turkish, and perhaps Armenian and Arabic: German was the only language for which he affected disdain."

BARROW...BLAIR ✧ Di-vines whose sermons B. had probably read, himself. Isaac Barrow was a remarkable man of learning, wit and a traveller in the East. He was the first Lucasian professor of Mathematics at Cambridge who resigned his Chair in favour of his student, Isaac Newton. John Tillotson was Archbishop of Canterbury; he published Barrow's religious works as well as his own sermons. South was a 17th century up-holder of the divine right of kings. Blair was a Scot and a Presbyterian who published his *Lectures on Rhetoric* in 1783.



DOGS, HAVE HAD MY DAY ✧ *IA* points out that this long proverbial phrase may be, here, a quote from Alexander Pope's translation of *The Odyssey*. When finally Odysseus confronts his wife's suitors in his home he shouts "You yellow dogs, you thought I'd never make it home from the land of Troy" (tr. Fitzgerald). Pope translates this as "Dogs, ye have had your day." B., too, had had his day in the limelight, waking one morning in 1812, as he said, to find himself famous as the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. He was lionized in Regency salons by women of rank and beauty. He was introduced to the Regent. But he lost his wealth and reputation — although scarcely ever his *fame* — though his own extraordinary folly in the next four years.

CLXVII

Return we to Don Juan. He begun
 To hear new words and to repeat them; but
 Some feelings, universal as the sun,
 Were such as could not in his breast be shut
 More than within the bosom of a nun.
 He was in love, as you would be no doubt,
 With a young benefactress; so was she,
 Just in the way we very often see.

CLXVIII

And every day by daybreak, rather early
 For Juan, who was somewhat fond of rest,
 She came into the cave, but it was merely
 To see her bird reposing in his nest.
 And she would softly stir his locks so curly,
 Without disturbing her yet slumbering guest,
 Breathing all gently o'er his cheek and mouth,
 As o'er a bed of roses the sweet south.

CLXIX

And every morn his colour freshlier came,
 And every day helped on his convalescence.
 'Twas well, because health in the human frame
 Is pleasant, besides being true love's essence,
 For health and idleness to passion's flame
 Are oil and gunpowder; and some good lessons
 Are also learnt from Ceres and from Bacchus,
 Without whom Venus will not long attack us.

CLXX

While Venus fills the heart (without heart really
 Love, though good always, is not quite so good),
 Ceres presents a plate of vermicelli
 (For love must be sustained like flesh and blood),
 While Bacchus pours out wine or hands a jelly.
 Eggs, oysters too, are amatory food,
 But who is their purveyor from above
 Heaven knows; it may be Neptune, Pan, or Jove.

FROM CERES AND FROM BACCHUS ✦ The Roman goddess of agriculture, *esp.* grain, and the Greek god of wine. B. is echoing the Roman playwright Terence ("Without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus is frigid" — from *The Eunuch*) here. He does so again in Canto XVI.

AMATORY FOOD ✦ As reputed aphrodisiacs? Neptune, God of the Sea and Pan, God of Nature and fertility are possible purveyors of oysters at least.

CLXXI

When Juan woke he found some good things ready,
 A bath, a breakfast, and the finest eyes
 That ever made a youthful heart less steady,
 Besides her maid's, as pretty for their size;
 But I have spoken of all this already,
 And repetition's tiresome and unwise.
 Well, Juan, after bathing in the sea,
 Came always back to coffee and Haidée.

CLXXII

Both were so young and one so innocent
 That bathing passed for nothing. Juan seemed
 To her, as'twere, the kind of being sent,
 Of whom these two years she had nightly dreamed,
 A something to be loved, a creature meant
 To be her happiness, and whom she deemed
 To render happy. All who joy would win
 Must share it; Happiness was born a twin.

CLXXIII

It was such pleasure to behold him, such
 Enlargement of existence to partake
 Nature with him, to thrill beneath his touch,
 To watch him slumbering and to see him wake.
 To live with him forever were too much,
 But then the thought of parting made her quake.
 He was her own, her ocean-treasure, cast
 Like a rich wreck, her first love and her last.

CLXXIV

And thus a moon rolled on, and fair Haidée
 Paid daily visits to her boy and took
 Such plentiful precautions that still he
 Remained unknown within his craggy nook.
 At last her father's prows put out to sea,
 For certain merchantmen upon the look,
 Not as of yore to carry off an Io,
 But three Ragusan vessels bound for Scio.


TO CARRY OFF AN IO ✧ Io was a river nymph that Zeus dallied with and whom he turned into a heifer (more bull myths) to hide her from his jealous wife, Hera. Hera found her out, however, and sent a gadfly to torment her. She fled, but was not "carried off".

RAGUSAN VESSELS ✧ Ragusa is Dubrovnik, the historic port of Croatia, not the city in Sicily. Scio we saw [above](#)

CLXXV

Then came her freedom, for she had no mother,
 So that, her father being at sea, she was
 Free as a married woman, or such other
 Female, as where she likes may freely pass,
 Without even the encumbrance of a brother,
 The freest she that ever gazed on glass.
 I speak of Christian lands in this comparison,
 Where wives, at least, are seldom kept in garrison.

CLXXVI

 77'21"

Now she prolonged her visits and her talk
 (For they must talk), and he had learnt to say
 So much as to propose to take a walk,
 For little had he wandered since the day
 On which, like a young flower snapped from the stalk,
 Drooping and dewy on the beach he lay,
 And thus they walked out in the afternoon
 And saw the sun set opposite the moon.

CLXXVII

It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
 With cliffs above and a broad sandy shore,
 Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host,
 With here and there a creek, whose aspect wore
 A better welcome to the tempest-tost.
 And rarely ceased the haughty billow's roar,
 Save on the dead long summer days, which make
 The outstretched ocean glitter like a lake.

CLXXVIII

And the small ripple spilt upon the beach
 Scarcely o'erpassed the cream of your champagne,
 When o'er the brim the sparkling bumpers reach,
 That spring-dew of the spirit, the heart's rain!
 Few things surpass old wine; and they may preach
 Who please—the more because they preach in vain.
 Let us have wine and woman, mirth and laughter,
 Sermons and soda water the day after.

SHE HAD NO MOTHER ✧ We learn in Canto IV that "*Her mother was a Moorish maid from Fez*", in Morocco. Presumably a captive of Lambro's who bequeathed her daughter beauty and passion and those "dark eyes" that B. mentions so often in his description of Juan's lovers (see also [Julia's](#) heritage).

THE SUN SET OPPOSITE THE MOON ✧ That is, on an evening of a full moon. This lunar setting echoes the seduction scene in Canto I.

CLXXIX

Man being reasonable must get drunk;
 The best of life is but intoxication.
 Glory, the grape, love, gold, in these are sunk
 The hopes of all men and of every nation;
 Without their sap, how branchless were the trunk
 Of life's strange tree, so fruitful on occasion.
 But to return. Get very drunk, and when
 You wake with headache, you shall see what then.

CLXXX

Ring for your valet, bid him quickly bring

Some hock and soda water. Then you'll know
 A pleasure worthy Xerxes, the great king;

For not the blest sherbet, sublimed with snow,
 Nor the first sparkle of the desert spring,
 Nor Burgundy in all its sunset glow,
 After long travel, ennui, love, or slaughter,
 Vie with that draught of hock and soda water.

CLXXXI

The coast—I think it was the coast that I
 Was just describing—yes, it was the coast -
 Lay at this period quiet as the sky,
 The sands untumbled, the blue waves untost,
 And all was stillness, save the sea bird's cry
 And dolphin's leap and little billow crost
 By some low rock or shelve, that made it fret
 Against the boundary it scarcely wet.

CLXXXII

And forth they wandered, her sire being gone,
 As I have said, upon an expedition.
 And mother, brother, guardian, she had none,
 Save Zoe, who although with due precision
 She waited on her lady with the sun,
 Thought daily service was her only mission,
 Bringing warm water, wreathing her long tresses,
 And asking now and then for cast-off dresses.

HOCK ✧ Hock is a, strictly, a Hockheimer wine from the Rheingau region of Germany. But in 18th Century Britain it referred to any white, riesling-style German wine. B. frequently praises “Hock and soda-water” as a sovereign cure for (the dehydration of) hangovers.

XERXES, THE GREAT KING ✧ Xerxes, King of Persia for five decades around the turn of the 5th Century BCE twice invaded the Greek peninsula, but was frustrated by the Spartans at Thermopylae and defeated by the Athenians at Salamis and Plataea. After that he withdrew to his Asian lands where, (Athenian) scandal said, he luxuriated to the extent of running out of amusements so that he offered a reward to anyone who could invent him a new pleasure. B. has already mentioned this same story in Canto I.

AS I HAVE SAID ✧ B. repeats himself and accumulate details — such as the time of day, the date, the condition of the skies — as a delaying rhetorical device that is prologue to some climax. Again, this echoes the build-up to the seduction scene in Canto I.

CLXXXIII

It was the cooling hour, just when the rounded
Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill,
Which then seems as if the whole earth it bounded,
Circling all nature, hushed and dim and still,
With the far mountain-crescent half surrounded
On one side, and the deep sea calm and chill
Upon the other, and the rosy sky
With one star sparkling through it like an eye.

CLXXXIV

And thus they wandered forth, and hand in hand,
Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
Glided along the smooth and hardened sand,
And in the worn and wild receptacles
Worked by the storms, yet worked as it were planned,
In hollow halls with sparry roofs and cells,
They turned to rest, and each clasped by an arm,
Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

SPARRY ROOFS ✧ That is, roofs hung with stalactites. The adjective, from the noun 'spar', is no longer in common use.

CLXXXV

They looked up to the sky, whose floating glow
Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright.
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight.
They heard the wave's splash and the wind so low,
And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other, and beholding this,
Their lips drew near and clung into a kiss,


CLXXXVI

A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth and love
And beauty, all concentrating like rays
Into one focus, kindled from above;
Such kisses as belong to early days,
Where heart and soul and sense in concert move,
And the blood's lava, and the pulse a blaze,
Each kiss a heart-quake, for a kiss's strength,
I think, it must be reckoned by its length.

CLXXXVII

By length I mean duration; theirs endured
 Heaven knows how long; no doubt they never
 reckoned,
 And if they had, they could not have secured
 The sum of their sensations to a second.
 They had not spoken, but they felt allured,
 As if their souls and lips each other beckoned,
 Which, being joined, like swarming bees they clung,
 Their hearts the flowers from whence the honey sprung.

CLXXXVIII

 82'54"

They were alone, but not alone as they
 Who shut in chambers think it loneliness.
 The silent ocean and the starlight bay,
 The twilight glow, which momentarily grew less,
 The voiceless sands and dropping caves, that lay
 Around them, made them to each other press,
 As if there were no life beneath the sky
 Save theirs, and that their life could never die.

CLXXXIX

They feared no eyes nor ears on that lone beach,
 They felt no terrors from the night, they were
 All in all to each other. Though their speech
 Was broken words, they thought a language there,
 And all the burning tongues the passions teach
 Found in one sigh the best interpreter
 Of nature's oracle, first love, that all
 Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.

CXC

Haidée spoke not of scruples, asked no vows
 Nor offered any; she had never heard
 Of plight and promises to be a spouse,
 Or perils by a loving maid incurred.
 She was all which pure ignorance allows
 And flew to her young mate like a young bird,
 And never having dreamt of falsehood, she
 Had not one word to say of constancy.

CXC I

She loved and was beloved, she adored
 And she was worshipped after nature's fashion.
 Their intense souls, into each other poured,
 If souls could die, had perished in that passion,
 But by degrees their senses were restored,
 Again to be o'ercome, again to dash on.
 And beating' gainst his bosom, Haidée's heart
 Felt as if never more to beat apart.

CXC II

Alas, they were so young, so beautiful,
 So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
 Was that in which the heart is always full,
 And having o'er itself no further power,
 Prompts deeds eternity cannot annul,
 But pays off moments in an endless shower
 Of hell-fire, all prepared for people giving
 Pleasure or pain to one another living.

CXC III

Alas for Juan and Haidée! They were
 So loving and so lovely; till then never,
 Excepting our first parents, such a pair
 Had run the risk of being damned forever.
 And Haidée, being devout as well as fair,
 Had doubtless heard about the Stygian river
 And hell and purgatory, but forgot
 Just in the very crisis she should not.

CXC IV

They look upon each other, and their eyes
 Glean in the moonlight, and her white arm clasps
 Round Juan's head, and his around hers lies
 Half buried in the tresses which it grasps.
 She sits upon his knee and drinks his sighs,
 He hers, until they end in broken gasps;
 And thus they form a group that's quite antique,
 Half naked, loving, natural, and Greek.



A GROUP THAT'S QUITE ANTIQUE ✍ This couplet is *almost* proverbial. There is little in Classical Greek literature that celebrates sexual license, but in the Greek Revival of late 18th century European architecture, art and fashion, "greekness" was associated with "naturalness" and sexual liberty. The *Directoire* style of womens' fashion, in particular, mimicked the loose, diaphanous gowns of Hellenistic statuary. When the prominent hostess Mme Tallien — briefly Napoleon's mistress, above in a portrait by Duvivier (1806) — appeared at the Opera wearing a white silk gown without sleeves or underwear, Talleyrand remarked "One could not be more sumptuously unclothed!". Pauline Bonaparte, Napoleon's younger sister, was represented naked as Venus Victrix in greek undress, by the sculptor Canova

CXCIV

And when those deep and burning moments passed,
 And Juan sunk to sleep within her arms,
 She slept not, but all tenderly, though fast,
 Sustained his head upon her bosom's charms.
 And now and then her eye to heaven is cast,
 And then on the pale cheek her breast now warms,
 Pillowed on her o'erflowing heart, which pants
 With all it granted and with all it grants.

CXCVI

An infant when it gazes on a light,
 A child the moment when it drains the breast,
 A devotee when soars the Host in sight,
 An Arab with a stranger for a guest,
 A sailor when the prize has struck in fight,
 A miser filling his most hoarded chest
 Feel rapture, but not such true joy are reaping
 As they who watch o'er what they love while sleeping.

CXCVII

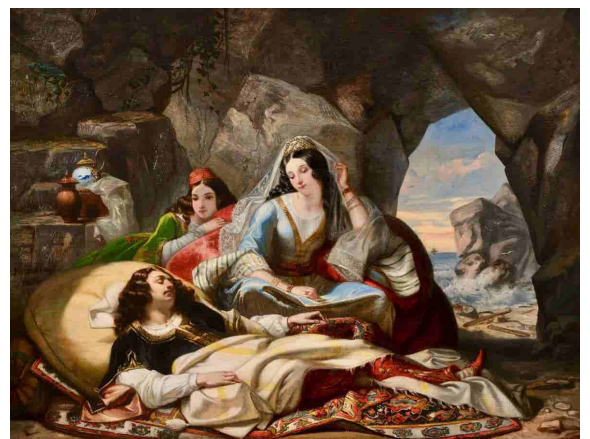
For there it lies so tranquil, so beloved;
 All that it hath of life with us is living,
 So gentle, stirless, helpless, and unmoved,
 And all unconscious of the joy'tis giving.
 All it hath felt, inflicted, passed, and proved,
 Hushed into depths beyond the watcher's diving,
 There lies the thing we love with all its errors
 And all its charms, like death without its terrors.

CXCVIII

The lady watched her lover; and that hour
 Of love's and night's and ocean's solitude
 O'erflowed her soul with their united power.
 Amidst the barren sand and rocks so rude
 She and her wave-worn love had made their bower,
 Where nought upon their passion could intrude,
 And all the stars that crowded the blue space
 Saw nothing happier than her glowing face.

WHEN SOARS THE HOST IN SIGHT ✧ The communion bread, elevated in the Mass after consecration. B. is enjoying himself by mixing the sacred, the profane and the perverse in this bunch of metaphors, even at the risk of rather spoiling the mood.

WHEN THE PRIZE HAS STRUCK ✧ The vanquished ship would "strike" or lower its topsail, de-powering the vessel, when it surrendered.



THE LADY WATCHED HER LOVER 🍃 It is typical of *Don Juan* that the emotion of the scene is conveyed through Haidée's experience, expression and thoughts rather than through Juan's. Our hero is a bit of a blank page throughout the poem; often little more than a clothes-hanger and sometimes few even of those. This painting, in an *overdressed* bourgeois-romantic style is by Marcel Saunier (Paris), 1839.


CXCIX

Alas, the love of women! It is known
 To be a lovely and a fearful thing,
 For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
 And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring
 To them but mockeries of the past alone,
 And their revenge is as the tiger's spring,
 Deadly and quick and crushing; yet as real
 Torture is theirs, what they inflict they feel.

CC

They are right, for man, to man so oft unjust,
 Is always so to women. One sole bond
 Awaits them, treachery is all their trust.
 Taught to conceal, their bursting hearts despond
 Over their idol, till some wealthier lust
 Buys them in marriage—and what rests beyond?
 A thankless husband, next a faithless lover,
 Then dressing, nursing, praying, and all's over.

CCI

 89'27"

Some take a lover, some take drams or prayers,
 Some mind their household, others dissipation,
 Some run away and but exchange their cares,
 Losing the advantage of a virtuous station.
 Few changes e'er can better their affairs,
 Theirs being an unnatural situation,
 From the dull palace to the dirty hovel.
 Some play the devil, and then write a novel.

CCII

Haidée was Nature's bride and knew not this;
 Haidée was Passion's child, born where the sun
 Showers triple light and scorches even the kiss
 Of his gazelle-eyed daughters. She was one
 Made but to love, to feel that she was his
 Who was her chosen. What was said or done
 Elsewhere was nothing. She had nought to fear,
 Hope, care, nor love beyond; her heart beat here.

WRITE A NOVEL ✧ As B.'s lover Lady Caroline Lamb did, anonymously: *Glenarvon* was her more-or-less incoherent 1816 *roman à clef* about her torrid affair with Byron in 1812-1813.

CCIII

And oh, that quickening of the heart, that beat!
 How much it costs us! Yet each rising throb
 Is in its cause as its effect so sweet
 That Wisdom, ever on the watch to rob
 Joy of its alchemy and to repeat
 Fine truths—even Conscience too—has a tough job
 To make us understand each good old maxim,
 So good I wonder Castlereagh don't tax'em.

CCIV

And now'twas done; on the lone shore were plighted
 Their hearts. The stars, their nuptial torches, shed
 Beauty upon the beautiful they lighted.
 Ocean their witness, and the cave their bed,
 By their own feelings hallowed and united;
 Their priest was Solitude, and they were wed.
 And they were happy, for to their young eyes
 Each was an angel, and earth Paradise.



THE CAVE THEIR BED 🍷 The classical model for this beach-side romance is in Book IV of Virgil's *Aeneid* where his Trojan-protoroman hero and Dido, Queen of Carthage, taking refuge from a storm in a cave, make love. Their affair, like Juan's and Haidée's, although stage-managed by Juno, goddess of marriage, leads eventually to tragedy when it conflicts with Aeneas' destiny to found Rome. The image is from the *Virgilianus Romanus*, a 5th century manuscript of the *Aeneid* in the Vatican Library

OH LOVE 🍷 A favorite trick. B uses an apostrophe to Love ("Luurv") many times in **Don Juan** to launch into a sarcastic aside apropos of nothing much. For example in St.88 of Canto I "Oh Love! in such as wilderness as this...", or again in St.106 "Oh Love! How perfect is thy mystic art...", or in St.2 of Canto III, "Oh Love! What is it in this world of ours..." ...and in a dozen more places until, finally, in St.5 of Canto XV he feigns exhaustion: "And as for love — O love! — We will proceed." **PC** notes that stanzas 205-207 were drafted on the back of a theatre program from Venice or Ravenna, but it is not clear what the drama was (B. doesn't seem to have been paying attention, in any case)

🍷 Oh Love...

CCV

Oh Love, of whom great Cæsar was the suitor,
 Titus the master, Antony the slave,
 Horace, Catullus, scholars, Ovid tutor,
 Sappho the sage bluestocking, in whose grave
 All those may leap who rather would be neuter
 (Leucadia's rock still overlooks the wave) -
 Oh Love, thou art the very god of evil,
 For after all, we cannot call thee devil.



CCVI

Thou mak'st the chaste connubial state precarious
 And jestest with the brows of mightiest men.
 Cæsar and Pompey, Mahomet, Belisarius
 Have much employed the Muse of history's pen.
 Their lives and fortunes were extremely various;
 Such worthies Time will never see again.
 Yet to these four in three things the same luck holds;
 They all were heroes, conquerors, and cuckolds.

CCVII

Thou mak'st philosophers; there's Epicurus
 And Aristippus, a material crew,
 Who to immoral courses would allure us
 By theories quite practicable too.
 If only from the devil they would insure us,
 How pleasant were the maxim (not quite new),
 'Eat, drink, and love, what can the rest avail us?'
 So said the royal sage Sardanapalus.

TITUS THE MASTER... ✧ Cæsar was *Cleopatra's* suitor. Titus, who became Emperor of Rome in 79 had, a decade earlier, been the general who destroyed Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. He brought back, as a mistress, Berenice, a princess of the Jewish royal family whom he is said to have truly loved. The Roman public disapproved of the liaison, however, and he sent Berenice home: thus *mastering* his love. Mark Anthony was *enslaved* by his infatuation with Cleopatra after Cæsar's assassination; forsaking Roman virtue for Eastern intrigue according to the popular scuttlebutt. He quit the crucial naval battle of Actium (31 BCE) early to pursue his fleeing Queen and was killed on his return to Egypt by locals hoping to ingratiate themselves with Octavian, the victor at Actium.

HORACE, CATULLUS, OVID ✧ B. means the poets Horace and Catullus learn from love, although they mostly complain. Ovid — whose *Ars Amatoria* led to his exile by the moralizing Emperor Augustus — gave apparently straightforward advice for men on pick-up techniques, although it was also probably a satire on the louche habits of Roman males.

SAPPHO ✧ The poet of Lesbos and of lesbian love who, legend has it, leaped to her death from the cliffs of Cape Leucardia when rebuffed in love by Phaon, a boatman. Confused? So is the legend of Sappho's sexuality based on tiny scraps of remaining poetry. Still, it seems odd that B., who was bisexual, should describe Sappho's revealed preferences for both sexes as "neuter". Perhaps he is referring to the sexlessness of death. The brooding depiction here is by Charles Mengin (1877)

THOU MAK'ST THE CHASTE CONNUBIAL STATE... ✧ These are famous men whose wives allegedly had sexual affairs outside their marriage; hence, by tradition, they wore 'horns on their brows' (like the horned cap of a fool or jester). **Caesar** divorced his wife, Pompeia, in 62 BCE on the apparently flimsy grounds of suspicion — fanned by Caesar's mother — that a certain Publius Clodius had attended a females-only religious ceremony she hosted. There was nothing flimsy, however, about the reports that Caesar had betrayed his co-Triumvir **Pompey** by bedding the latter's wife, Mucia, in the same year. The Prophet of Islam, **Mohammed**, undertook many military campaigns on the Arabian peninsula. One morning, after a night-march, his favourite (*of four*) wives, Ayesha, who had been left behind, entered the camp in the company of a young man. Mohammed declared his faith in her innocence, based on divine revelation (Koran xxiv), but his enemies said otherwise. **Belisarius** was the leading general of Justinian's Eastern Roman Empire who had a remarkable record of victories in North Africa and Italy. His wife Antonina, a powerful woman allied to the empress Theodora, is said to have cuckolded him repeatedly including with his godson.

THOU MAK'ST PHILOSOPHERS... ✧ The Greek philosopher **Epicurus** held that true pleasure came from the enjoyment of good things in moderation, but his teaching was misconstrued by later commentators as an endorsement of luxury. An 'epicurean' came to mean someone given to sensual gratification. **Aristippus**, a philosopher who lived nearly a century before Epicurus, held very similar views to him. Sardanapalus (Assurbanipal) was, according to the Greeks, an effeminate, luxuriating Assyrian king who indulged himself while his realm collapsed around him. Byron composed a verse-tragedy (*Sardanapalus*) about him in 1821 portraying him as a transvestite who dies heroically.

CCVIII

But Juan, had he quite forgotten Julia?
 And should he have forgotten her so soon?
 I can't but say it seems to me most truly a
 Perplexing question, but no doubt the moon
 Does these things for us, and whenever newly a
 Strong palpitation rises, 'tis her boon,
 Else how the devil is it that fresh features
 Have such a charm for us poor human creatures?

CCIX

I hate inconstancy; I loathe, detest,
 Abhor, condemn, abjure the mortal made
 Of such quicksilver clay that in his breast
 No permanent foundation can be laid.
 Love, constant love, has been my constant guest,
 And yet last night, being at a masquerade,
 I saw the prettiest creature, fresh from Milan,
 Which gave me some sensations like a villain.

I HATE INCONSTANCY ✧ Of course this protest is comically insincere, especially in light of the previous verse that somewhat explains and excuses "inconsistency" on Juan's part and the next that shows him ready to flirt and the following that excuse a 'wandering eye...'. Still, although promiscuous when young and a 'good hater', Byron was a rather faithful lover, a constant friend and a generous patron even to those whom, privately, he grew weary of, or quarrelled with. This is one of those instances of B. performing in 'byronic' mode that tends to obscure the differences between man and myth, perhaps even in his own mind.

BEING AT A MASQUERADE ✧ In the midst of drafting this Canto, B. was meanwhile happily debauching himself in the 1819 Carnivale of Venice.

OMITTED VERSES... ✎ The fair copy of Canto II in Teresa Guiccioli's hand contains two verses intended, probably, to appear at this point that were not included in Byron's own fair copy or, therefore, in the final print.

Shakespeare exclaims "Hang up Philosophy,
 "Unless Philosophy can make a Juliet!" But
 This is not the death that it should die –
 For when the turbid Passions are unruly, it
 No doubt can soothe them with a lullaby –
 Last night I had another proof how truly it
 Can calm, for what it "made" me on that same
 Night was a "Juliet" even to the name. –

Juliet, or Giulietta – which last was
 The real name of this fair Veronese,
 O'er whose sad tale Love echoes still, Alas! –
 And Youth still weeps the tender tears that please
 Another Juliet – whom I would not pass,
 Her tale is told with so much simple ease -
 Is Rousseau's Julietta; I ne'er knew
 One of the name but that I loved her too.

Hang up Philosophy... is from *Romeo and Juliet*, III iii 56-7. **Rousseau's Julietta** is the heroine of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's epistolary novel *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1791) B. admired the book for its psychological insight.

CCX

But soon Philosophy came to my aid
 And whispered, "Think of every sacred tie!"
 'I will, my dear Philosophy,' I said,
 'But then her teeth, and then oh heaven, her eye!
 I'll just inquire if she be wife or maid
 Or neither—out of curiosity.'
 'Stop!' cried Philosophy with air so Grecian
 (Though she was masked then as a fair Venetian).

CCXI

'Stop!' So I stopped. But to return. That which
 Men call inconstancy is nothing more
 Than admiration due where Nature's rich
 Profusion with young beauty covers o'er
 Some favoured object; and as in the niche
 A lovely statue we almost adore,
 This sort of adoration of the real
 Is but a heightening of the beau ideal.

CCXII

'Tis the perception of the beautiful,
 A fine extension of the faculties,
 Platonic, universal, wonderful,
 Drawn from the stars and filtered through the skies,
 Without which life would be extremely dull.
 In short it is the use of our own eyes,
 With one or two small senses added, just
 To hint that flesh is formed of fiery dust.

CCXIII

🕒 95'20"

Yet 'tis a painful feeling, and unwilling,
 For surely if we always could perceive
 In the same object graces quite as killing
 As when she rose upon us like an Eve,
 'Twould save us many a heartache, many a shilling
 (For we must get them anyhow or grieve),
 Whereas if one sole lady pleased forever,
 How pleasant for the heart, as well as liver!

CCXIV

The heart is like the sky, a part of heaven,
 But changes night and day too, like the sky.
 Now o'er it clouds and thunder must be driven,
 And darkness and destruction as on high,
 But when it hath been scorched and pierced and riven,
 Its storms expire in water drops. The eye
 Pours forth at last the heart's blood turned to tears,
 Which make the English climate of our years.

SO I STOPPED ✧ But B. did not stop, at least during 1818. If we are to believe his letter of 19 January 1819 to Hobhouse, he had at least twenty three lovers whom he names — including two mother-daughter pairs — during the Carnivale alone. He caught an STD from one.

NOTHING MORE THAN ADMIRATION ✧ The proposed resolution of the paradox that our author hates inconstancy but approves social and sexual adventure. It's not really "inconstancy" at all, but a consequence of admiration for 'ideal' beauty. Are you persuaded?



TERESA GAMBA-GUICCIOLI ✦ Guiseppe Fangnani's 1859 portrait of an older, still beautiful Teresa. Byron had fallen out of love with her but he remained loyal; "constant" to the last if we don't count his final, rather hopeless, infatuation with a young Greek, Lukas Chalandritsanos

CCXV

The liver is the lazaret of bile,
 But very rarely executes its function,
 For the first passion stays there such a while
 That all the rest creep in and form a junction,
 Like knots of vipers on a dunghill's soil -
 Rage, fear, hate, jealousy, revenge, compunction -
 So that all mischiefs spring up from this entrail,
 Like earthquakes from the hidden fire called 'central'.

CCXVI

In the meantime, without proceeding more
 In this anatomy, I've finished now
Two hundred and odd stanzas as before,
 That being about the number I'll allow
 Each canto of the twelve or twenty-four;
 And laying down my pen, I make my bow,
 Leaving Don Juan and Haidée to plead
 For them and theirs with all who deign to read.

THE LAZARET OF BILE ✧ A *lazaretto* is a quarantine hospital for infectious diseases. B. means that the liver is meant to protect the rest of the system from corrosive effects of 'bile' or frustration and anger.

THE HIDDEN FIRE CALLED 'CENTRAL' ✧ Some thought that earthquakes originated in outbursts of energy from the fiery core of the planet.

TWO HUNDRED AND ODD STANZAS ✧ Most of the later Cantos were little more than half the length of this.



About

AN EDITION of Cantos I and II of *Don⌘Juan* issued on the bicentennial of their first publication two hundred years earlier, might perhaps be *anonymous*, as the first edition was. But that would be a pedantic recreation. There is no need, now, for John Murray's strategy for avoiding prosecution or — possibly his other motive — for diversifying his Author's product line-up without hurting sales.

Two centuries later *Don⌘Juan* remains the greatest comic poem — and one of the greatest comedies of any kind — in english. But modern readership seems smaller than it should be. Perhaps the poem is too long for modern taste. Perhaps it is no longer quite scandalous enough. Perhaps its satirical targets are too obscure for readers with no knowledge of the disappointed, hungry, politically unstable era of late-Regency England. Then, Byron's modern fame as an ennobled, romantic rascal who produced some alluring love lyrics is bound to leave his more challenging later work in the shade.

I hope annotations and illustrations of Cantos I and II will help again to provoke renewed interest in the poem. Perhaps some who listen to my narration of the two Cantos will be provoked into reading the rest of the text for themselves.

This edition, comprising this PDF file and two MP3 audio files, has been uploaded to the Internet Archive (archive.org) in an attempt to preserve its availability; if not for another two centuries (does *anything* last that long any more?), at least for many years. On the date of publication (27 June, 2019), the URL is:

<https://archive.org/details/ByronDonJuanCantosI-2Petergallagher>



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